

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose



Shantanu Dey

**The Life Story of one of the greatest heroes of
Indian Independence Movement, and beyond**

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Dedicated to the memory of my mother, late Ashoka Dey, who was a history teacher and who wanted me to write something

Acknowledgement

The book is dedicated to author Shailesh De, whose magnum opus, "[Ami Subhas Bolchi](#)" still inspires many Subhas lovers.

Also dedicated to the countless Netaji Subhas devotees across the world, whether they believe in the air crash theory or not, and irrespective of whether they believe that he is living or dead. Our genuine love and remembrance keep him alive and our hope and faith in him ensures his immortality.

The book is dedicated to all those sung and unsung heroes of freedom who sacrificed their lives and property at the altar of the motherland which many of them had never seen - the Indians of East and South East Asia who responded to the clarion call of "Give me blood, I will give you freedom" and "Total Mobilization." The book remembers those heroes of INA who laid down their lives as supreme sacrifice to free their country from the foreign oppression and those who lived in penury in an independent India for their great mistake of loving their country and siding with the real hero of Indian independence.

We are indebted to Sri Bijoy Nag of Jayasree Publications, son of honourable and esteemed Freedom Fighter and Leader Leela Roy, who most graciously has permitted to use photographs from Jayasree Facebook site 'Jayasree' the Voice of Netaji Since 1931'. Photos have also been taken from a twitter handle "Ami Subhas Bolchi" and the Facebook Discussion Groups - "Mission Netaji" and "Netaji". The photos thus are all crowd sourced and all such contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

Some quotations are taken from the book "Oi Mahamanab Ase", by Charanik, published by Jayasree publications. We humbly acknowledge that several translations and interpretations from the original Bengali text may not be perfect. Also historical references are largely taken from Dr. R.C Majumdar's "History of Freedom Movement in India, Volume 3" as that is perceived to be the most unbiased account of our Freedom Movement.

The book lists all the books and publications in the Books and Resources section that were directly or indirectly referred to while developing the contents and in most places it has acknowledged the sources from where the comments were adopted verbatim.

There are many controversies surrounding Netaji, and they have been listed out in the Controversies and Legacies section under Metamorphosis chapter - viz. related to his marriage, disappearance, reappearance or death, lost INA treasures, and his disputed legacy. The book stays neutral in these matters as far as possible and tries to refer the reader to the many experts and Netaji researchers who are working in these fields. The book does not intend to promote any of the works but it is up to the reader to explore them and decide on her own. After all, information related to Netaji should be available for everybody and people should be

able to discriminate between what is right and what is wrong based on their own intelligence. In this respect the book acknowledges the contributions of several researchers who have tirelessly worked to solve the controversies associated with Netaji's "disappearance", foremost among them being Prof. Samar Guha, who wanted Netaji to get his due honour from the Government, and Netaji's brother Suresh Chandra Bose, who penned the Dissentient Report for Shah Nawaz Committee. There were and are many other Netaji followers who worked tirelessly to ensure that the Netaji issue remains visible to the people and carried out their fights in the form of Public Interest Litigation (PIL), filing Right to Information on matters related to Netaji, deposing before the commissions with information, unearthing new information about the possible life after death of Subhas Bose, holding conferences and writing books to broadcast their findings to the public, and all other such activities to keep the spirit of Netaji alive, purely out of love and admiration for the great leader. The book is indebted heavily to the book History of Freedom Movement of India in three volumes by Dr. R.C Majumdar.

Objective

The book is not another intended to be another biography of Netaji, there are far too many books on the subject. It is aimed at establishing a platform for providing information on Netaji, for the reference of the future generations. Also the book is meant for those who want to know more about Subhas Chandra Bose and not for the Netaji experts. Experts can always contribute with new information and content to enrich the site, www.netajisubhasbose.org which is the primary source for this book. This book is not about Netaji research, it merely provides the outcome of the research from various sources.

Indian history has been deliberately distorted and maligned by a section of the dominant historians who unfortunately have shown disrespect to their profession by aligning more with their inherent biases and ideologies than with the facts. The social media has played a revolutionary role in ensuring the sunset of the mainstream media. I believe in a similar way social history will play a major role in highlighting truth to all. Information must be debated, discussed and analyzed for veracity but never hidden from public. This much we owe to our future generations. This work will not be an everlasting one, it is temporary and transitory. But if it helps in inspiring even one soul, the work will be fruitful.

The other objective is already highlighted, to make all pertinent information about Netaji including the controversies, available in the public domain and not to take sides. Let the Truth come out, let it be self-revealing and enlightening. No force in this world is capable of suppressing the truth for long, it has an uncanny way of finding its path out.

Disclaimer

The Controversies constitute the opinions and the findings of the researchers and the authors of the books that have been referenced on the said topics. The book occasionally provides opinion on all such findings but mainly puts all the facts at the doorstep of the discerning readers.

**Subhasji Subhasji
Woh Jaan-e-Hind aa gaye
Hai Naz Jispe Hind ko
Woh Shaan-e-Hind aa gaye**

Introduction

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, born on 23rd January 1897, was undoubtedly one of the greatest sons of mother India whose mission in life was to free his motherland from the clutches of foreign tyranny and oppression. He renounced his entire life in this mission, often undergoing tremendous hardships, perilous journeys and suicidal missions. But his self-sacrifice paid off. India became independent. Did this valiant son of the Mother India return to her bosom, secretly? Who knows! Millions of his devotees across the world sincerely believe that the plane crash theory was concocted to help him escape and continue his struggle against Imperialist forces across Asia. Whatever was his fate, Subhas Chandra Bose as Netaji will remain immortal and will be very much "alive".

"It is our duty to pay for our liberty with our own blood. The freedom that we'll win through our sacrifice and exertions, we shall be able to preserve with our own strength."

"Let us all stand shoulder to shoulder and say with one heart and with one voice that our motto is, as Tennyson said through Ulysses, "To strive, to seek, to find, .and not to yield"

Genesis

To become a perfect human being, one needs to be

- 1) Embodiment of the past**
- 2) Product of the present**
- 3) Prophet of the future**



Birth

On 23rd January, 1897, a few days after Swami Vivekananda, the lion of Vedanta, set his foot on Indian soil, back from his triumphant world tour, another star was born in the Oriya Bazar in Cuttack who would be an embodiment of Swamiji's ideals. He was born at about 12 PM, to Janaki Nath Bose, who was to become a Rai Bahadur, and Prabhavati Devi, belonging to the erstwhile Datta family of Hatkhola, a well-known family in Calcutta. He was the ninth of the fourteen children and was the sixth of the eight sons. Janaki Nath Bose was a well-established lawyer practicing in the bar of the court of Cuttack. His family hailed from the village Kodalia in South Bengal.

Let us hear from Subhas himself what he has to say about his family - excerpts taken from the book *An Indian Pilgrim*. "My father, Janaki Nath Bose, had migrated to Orissa in the eighties of the last (nineteenth) century and had settled down in Cuttack as a lawyer. There I was born on Saturday, the 23rd January, 1897. My father was descended from the Boses of Mahinagar, while my mother Prabhavati, belonged to the family of the Dutts of Hatkhola." "Ours was not a rich but what might be regarded as a well to do middle class family, " he continues. "I used to feel like a thoroughly insignificant being. My parents awed me to a degree. My father usually had a cloak of reserve round him and kept his children at a distance. What with his professional work and what with his public duties, he did not have much time for his family."

The founder of the Dakshin Rari clan of the Kayastha Bose's was one Dasarath Bose. One of the descendants of Dasarath was Mukti Bose, who resided in Mahinagar village. One of his descendants was Mahipati, who was conferred the title of Subuddhi Khan by the then sultan of Goud province. One of his grandsons, Gopinath Bose, was a minister of Sultan Hussain Shah. He was given the title of Purandar Khan, and was a very famous person during his time. Janaki Nath was the son of Haranath Bose. He was a completely self made man. He rose from abject poverty to become a successful attorney in the Bar of Cuttack. He married Prabhavati Devi. In 1901 Janaki Bose was elected as the Chairman of the Cuttack municipality. By 1905 he became the Government Pleader and Public Prosecutor. In 1912 he became a member of Bengal legislative council and received the title of Rai Bahadur. In 1930 he renounced that title in protest against the British Government's repressive measures.

In the words of a great man who was possibly narrating Subhas's birth story in his own words in the book Oi Mahamanab Ase, "I have had been a Sannyasin from birth. I heard them say that I was born in AJAPA YOGA. From my childhood I began hearing and perusing scriptures. My most and only beloved mother was a direct initiated disciple of Paramhamsa Deva. By every suck of her breast, through every kiss of her caresses, touches, tender looks and words, the Tattwa-Shakties of the Divine Mother flowed in and filled me. My father gave into me thoroughness and strength in service to others and fighting activeness."

A trait of Janaki Nath was that he was extremely compassionate and used to donate a large amount of money to the poor and needy. In his ancestral village he developed several facilities for the poor. In this respect we find a parallel with another great father, Biswanath Datta, who was the father of Narendranath Datta, in later days Swami Vivekananda. The two greatest sons of Bengal had an uncanny resemblance in terms of parentage. Both the fathers were self made men rising from abject poverty through difficult situations. But there were differences too. Janaki Nath was more spiritual minded in contrast with a materialistic Biswanath Datta. He took initiation twice. He was simple and austere in his lifestyle. Prabhavati's grandfather Kashinath Datta was a scholar. One of his sons in law was Hariballav Bose, a cousin of Balaram Bose, a direct householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Prabhavati was the eldest daughter of Ganganarayan Datta.

Subhas Chandra Bose's eldest brother was Satish Chandra Bose, who was a barrister. The second elder Sarat Chandra Bose, his "Mejda", was the nearest and dearest to him. He went to England in 1912 to become a barrister and practised law in Calcutta High Court. Later he plunged into politics and became a member of Swaraj party and thereafter joined Congress. He spent many years in prison while agitating alongside Subhas. His

wife Bibhavati Devi was very close to Subhas. Subhas's "Sejda" or the third elder brother, was a deputy magistrate in Orissa. In 1956 he was nominated as one of the members of the Shah Nawaz Committee formed to probe the death or disappearance of Subhas Chandra Bose and submitted his dissentient report against the conclusions of the committee. Slightly elder brother Sunil Bose was a cardiologist. After Subhas there were two more sons of Janaki Nath - Sailesh Chandra Bose and Santosh Chandra Bose.



Janaki Nath Bose - father of Subhas Chandra Bose
(source: Wikimedia commons)



Family of Subhas Bose along with his siblings - Subhas standing on the extreme right



Prabhavati Devi - mother of Subhas Chandra Bose who belonged to the famous Datta family of Hatkhola, to whom a young Subhas Chandra wrote a most touching letter about his country's problems and his realization (translated from original Bengali) - "Mother, India is God's very own country. In this country God has incarnated in every age for teaching mankind, has sanctified the sinful world, and has planted the seed of Truth and Virtue in the heart of every Indian. That's why mother, I say that God loves India whole heartedly. In this country you will get whatever you want..."

Childhood

In his book 'An Indian Pilgrim', Subhas describes vividly his psychology as a child, how he was awed by his parents and was feeling left out in a large family of numerous brothers and sisters. On the other hand, he argued, that in a large family one develops "sociability, and overcomes self-centeredness and angularity." He had to live with his uncles and cousins who paid visits to Cuttack and stayed in the house of Janaki Nath. Even distant relatives hailing from the village would find a place there. There were a number of dependents and servants as well, and a large representation of the animal world consisting of the cows, horses, goats, sheep, deer, peacock, birds, mongoose etc. Servants formed an integral part of the household. Subhas's nurse was called Sarada, who took utmost care of him. When he was five years old, he was admitted to Protestant European or P.E school. On the very first day Subhas had an accident. He fell down and had an injury. But the very next day his intense desire to go to a school materialized. The P.E school was mostly for the Europeans and Anglo Indians and there were very few Indian students. His other brothers and sisters also studied in this school, possibly because they could be able to learn English faster and better. The Headmaster Mr. Young did not have any respect for the local culture and language. The school predominantly tried to impose the Christian and European culture on its students. No vernacular subjects were studied. The major advantage of studying in such a school

was to imbibe the culture of punctuality and discipline, of cleanliness and personal hygiene. Among the teachers, young Subhas only liked Miss Lawrence who had a sympathetic attitude. Other teachers were barely tolerable. Everything that was taught pertained to European culture, history, geography and norms. Nothing about India was taught. There were certain discriminations against Indians, like they were not allowed to sit in the scholarship examinations. Young Subhas did not have any hostile attitude against the school authorities but he was somehow not feeling comfortable. He decided to leave the school in 1909 and joined Ravenshaw Collegiate school in Cuttack. While studying here he came under the influence of two great men who were to influence and shape his coming years - his headmaster Benimadhab Das, an ardent Nationalist, through his personality and teachings, and Swami Vivekananda, the gigantic spiritual leader of India, through his works.

Benimadhab Das was born in 1866 in Chattagram of erstwhile East Bengal, now Bangladesh. He was a renowned teacher and scholar. He had joined Ravenshaw Collegiate School as a Headmaster. Influenced by Keshab Chandra Sen, the founder of Nababidhan Brahma Samaj, a reformist spiritual organization, he had joined Brahma Samaj. However, he was a patriot above everything else. He taught history and philosophy to his students. He was the proud father of two great revolutionary daughters - Kalyani and Bina, of whom Bina rose into fame by firing at Governor Stanley Jackson in 1932.

Swami Vivekananda was the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, the famous sage and saint of Bengal who attained enlightenment in almost all religious disciplines and practices, while living as a temple priest in Dakshineswar. Swami Vivekananda was the founder of the Vedanta societies and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, the spiritual and service wings of the Belur Math, Head Quarters of the Ramakrishna Order. In his short life span the spiritual giant had left an indelible imprint in the history of mankind by being the chief orator in the Parliament of Religion in Chicago, and by his teachings of Vedanta in the Western world as the first Hindu spiritual teacher in the West. He had influenced and inspired many thinking minds of nineteenth and twentieth centuries like Romaine Rolland, Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Prof. William James, Tolstoy, Prof. Maxmueller, Nicola Tesla, Christopher Isherwood, Aldous Huxley, Huston Smith, and J.D Salinger among others. Vivekananda infused the spirit of patriotism among the youth and gave a clarion call to "Arise, Awake and Stop not, till the Goal (of manifestation of divinity in human life) is reached."



The three teachers of Subhas Chandra - from right Benimadhab Das, Ramakrishna Paramhansa & Swami Vivekananda: Courtesy Wikimedia commons

Education

Subhas noticed some perceptible differences in the new school. He was all along a good student. But now his fellow students had begun to respect him on account of his family, which was unthinkable in a European school. On the very first day he was humiliated on account of his zero knowledge of Sanskrit, by his Pandit, but just six months down the line he silenced his critics by becoming first in Sanskrit and Bengali. His only rival in this school was his fellow student Charu Chandra, who was also a good friend. Subhas was not interested in sports but he had a knack for gardening. Among his teachers, who were both Bengali and Oriya, Subhas was particularly influenced by Benimadhab Das. Through the shining example of the purity of his own personal life Benimadhab taught his students that moral principles were of the highest value in life. A staunch Brahmo and a follower of Keshab Chandra Sen, the Brahmo Samaj leader, Benimadhab imbued in Subhas a spirit of love for the country, its culture and its people in its entirety. His life was an example to his students - straight, pious, detached, yet loving, compassionate and friendly to the students, with a depth of knowledge in the subject he taught. He could arouse interest in his students about the subjects and thus became very popular among them. When because of his political ideals that were not liked by some of the British subjects, he was given a transfer order from Cuttack, his students were heart broken. More so was Subhas. "Master moshai had the greatest influence on me. Reason being, he turned around my life. Concentration, loving nature and deriving strength from it, all are his teachings", said a great man in his later years. However, the worship of the nature did not give him lasting peace. he was looking for a permanent ideal, and all of a sudden he got it. One of his relatives, Suhrit Chandra Mitra

had come to Cuttack. In his house Subhas discovered a set of Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. The Headmaster had aroused in him a love for the nature, for the nation and for the moral principles. But he had not been able to kindle the light of spirituality that was dormant all along. Vivekananda, one of the greatest teachers, did ignite the fire in young Subhas. His lectures and letters inspired Subhas and he could understand that the main theme of his teaching was serving the God in all beings and in the process manifesting the divinity within. Vivekananda also inspired him to serve the motherland by serving its people - the poor, the needy, and the oppressed. By the age of fifteen Subhas had got his life's mission decided. Vivekananda became his ideal, nay, even his passion. From Vivekananda he discovered his guru Sri Ramakrishna and the latter's intense hunger for God realization. His simple teaching of renunciation of lust and greed, and his intense love for God, touched Subhas deeply. That teaching was to become the bedrock of his life, even in his later years when he was in the middle of a combative and intensely turbulent life. Within a few months Subhas had developed a circle of devotees of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. They discussed the ideals, the philosophy and formed a study group. This led to inevitable frictions with the family and caused great pain to him. But he remained rock solid to his ideals.

“The individual must die, so that the nation may live. Today I must die, so that India may live and may win freedom and glory.”

The Inner and Outer Journey

Search for Truth



It was told to this group of spiritual aspirants that a Guru was the most important need for a spiritual life. Subhas in his right earnest began his search for truth, and in all sincerity tried to search for a Guru. Once a very aged Sannyasi (according to some version famous monk Bholananda Giriji) came to Cuttack. Subhas and his friends respectfully served him. The old Sannyasi advised him to eat vegetarian, recite certain slokas and respect the parents by prostrating before them daily. The third advice was the most difficult one to follow for young Subhas, but he remained at it with a steadfastness that he had displayed in all his endeavours. Every morning he bowed down (made pranaam) before his parents. At first they were surprised and he was embarrassed. But soon it became an accepted norm. Afterwards he realized that these advices did not advance him much towards his spiritual goals. So he left everything else and stuck to Ramakrishna Vivekananda. The next endeavor was seva or service as per the ideals of Swami Vivekananda. He served anybody coming to his house and got a lot of satisfaction in fulfilling their needs. He was not even sixteen when he started to work in the villages along with a group of like-minded friends. In one village they conducted some educational work and were praised for their efforts. But in another Orissa village they were looked upon with suspicion. It dawned upon them that the villagers did not have a good experience with gentlemen before and that's why they were naturally suspicious of their motives. At this time Subhas did not have much knowledge about the political situations. He had witnessed agitations against the Partition of Bengal, that had triggered the Nationalist and Revolutionary Movements. He however developed a deep kinship with the revolutionaries and began keeping their photos cut from the newspapers in his room. One day, a police officer, who was a relative, saw the photos in his room and was scandalized. He informed Janaki Nath and the very next day all the photos were removed from his room. Subhas felt bad about it, but could do nothing. He had yet to grasp the full import of the freedom movement and what it meant. So when Janaki Nath proposed that he should go with him to the coronation festival of King George V, he readily acquiesced. Imagine, the later day emperor of the revolutionaries in India participating in the coronation function of the British emperor George V and deriving immense satisfaction from the event!

Birth of the Ideals



Sister Nivedita and Aurobindo Ghosh laid down the spiritual foundation of Indian Independence Movement. Sister Nivedita worked tirelessly to awaken the youth to the ideals of Swami Vivekananda and planted the seeds of rebellion. Aurobindo came back from England to work for the upliftment of India. Eventually he acted as the mentor for the initial revolutionary movement following the Partition of Bengal. Aurobindo was acquitted in Alipore Bomb Case and retired from active politics. Image Courtesy: Wikipedia

In 1905, the Partition of Bengal came into effect that was to form the basis of a future partition of India. Bengal was split on the grounds of administrative efficiency, masking the real intention of dividing the Hindu Muslim population and fueling the ambition of a separate Muslim state, so as to considerably weaken the Hindu Nationalism that was taking shape. Viceroy Curzon was the architect of the split. Writes Dr. R.C Majumdar, "Curzon who undertook a tour of Bengal to ascertain the sentiment, evidently found corroboration to his theory that the newfound nationalism among the Bengali speaking population was dangerous to the interest of the British empire and it was imperative to weaken the Bengalis by dividing them. According to the British, the Islamic population were politically less advanced and were loyal to the crown and therefore it was necessary to separate them from the influence of the Hindus by pampering to their demands of a separation of the Muslim majority population." Bengal, and the rest of India, erupted in protests. Almost all the local newspapers including moderate leader Surendranath Bannerjee's Bengali, had rebelled against the proposed partition. Even the English language dailies were not favorable to the decision. The movement soon

grew in stature under the stewardship of Surendranath Bannerjee and other Nationalist leaders who had evolved from being dependent on prayers and petitions to take the battle to the enemy's camp through mass mobilization. The movement against the partition, for the first time in the history of British India, impressed common people who expressed their solidarity against what they perceived to be tyranny and oppression. It roused the social consciousness and made people, esp. the educated youth, aware of the evils of a foreign yoke. It also brought up a new class of leaders from the educated section of the Bengalis. Krishna Kumar Mitra, the editor of Sanjivani, suggested the idea of boycotting British goods and shunning all contacts with the Government. Swadeshi movement was given birth, together with the boycott of all foreign goods by the common men. Ashwini Kumar Datta, led the movement from Barishal. Mukunda Das, the bard, wrote his immortal songs like, "Chede dao reshmi chudi", asking Bengali women to shun all foreign made bangles, and went from village to village rousing common folks with his simple lyrics. Narendranath Sen, a moderate leader, who was also the editor of the Indian Mirror, brought in a resolution demanding the abstinence from purchase of the English goods. "Sandhya" of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay churned out fiery sermons against the foreign rule. The Dawn Society of Satish Chandra Mukherjee became one of the most active proponents of Swadeshi and Boycott movements. Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandi of Kasimbazar described partition as the greatest calamity fallen upon the Bengali speaking race since the commencement of the British rule. Rabindranath Tagore and his family members organized a Rakhi utsav to tie the knots of solidarity and brotherhood and Rabindranath composed his famous song, "Banglar Mati Banglar Jal" on the occasion. Dwijendralal Roy and Rajani Kanta Sen wrote a number of patriotic songs that instilled pride in one's culture and national heritage.

Negating Government attempts to communally divide the masses, Muslims joined a mass agitation in Raja Bazar, which was chaired by Abdul Rasool. A young, aspiring, would be ICS, Arnabindu Ghosh, had quit England's shore to come back to India and prepared himself for a long fight in Baroda. Later he came to Bengal to organize and stimulate people's consciousness against what he perceived to be a diabolic and oppressive rule, through his literary work as well as his active mentoring and organizing of the revolutionary societies. He worked closely with an Irish lioness, a disciple of the spiritual giant Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita. Nivedita did not let Curzon rest in peace and constantly attacked the Government through her many articles, with the support of her friend Ratcliffe of 'The Statesman'. When Curzon had proclaimed that Indians were habitual liars, and there was not a single protest from any of the Indians present, Sister Nivedita took it upon herself to show how Curzon himself had lied in Korea. She inspired the youth in the ideals of Swami Vivekananda and through her

writings and speeches kindled the fire of patriotism. She also inspired a lot of young revolutionaries, kept close association with the luminaries and dignitaries on one hand and the revolutionary societies like Anushilon Samity on the other. In the Indian Review of March 1905 she wrote: 'This Swadeshi movement is an integral part of the National Righteousness. ...' A National College was set up in Jadavpur, of which Aurobindo became the first principal. These two unsheathed swords had shaped the way India's history was to progress and their successor was already chosen by the Providence. These events had later shaped the destiny of Bengal and India and left a profound influence on the rebel Subhas.

Writes Dr. R.C Majumdar in his History of Freedom Movement, "Partition of Bengal and the movement that followed in its wake is significant in many ways. First, it reflected a deep sense of injustice and injury inflicted by a foreign rule that was insensitive to the plight and the pride of a people and a culture. Second, it resulted in the rise of leaders and reshaped their roles from being instruments of prayers and petitions to conducting and inspiring mass agitations. Third, it was mostly nonviolent in nature, despite the grievous injury and the highhandedness of the authorities. Fourth, it raised the consciousness of the masses and instilled patriotism, which later burst forth in the subsequent stages of the freedom movement. Bengal was the first to rise like an injured lion, and then the rest of India followed." Although the partition did not impact young Subhas who was only eight years old, its scars had left a deep impression on the people's psyche that influenced Subhas indirectly when he became politically conscious, about a decade later. Years later he would proclaim, "If Bengal dies, who lives. If Bengal lives, who dies!" He had warned against the devastating effects of Partition of India on Bengal.

After clearing Entrance examination Subhas came to Calcutta and was admitted to the Presidency College. But his parents' purpose of sending him to Calcutta was not very successful. In Calcutta also Subhas did not have much trouble in setting up a group of students who were like him in disposition, i.e. spiritually oriented and followers of Ramakrishna Vivekananda ideology. Goal of his life was clear, he was not to immerse himself in usual pursuit of happiness and pleasure that students of his age would have done in his place. He had a higher ideal, of service to the mankind, of renunciation and of course, celibacy. He had a tough battle to fight, with his own tendencies and inclinations against his goal. Renouncing the thoughts of sexual desires esp. was not easy. That he succeeded to a large extent in overcoming the tides against him, of his family pressures and his internal struggles, testify for his immense will power, something that characterized him throughout his life. He understood that life had a

purpose and for achieving this purpose it was essential to train the body and the mind through a process of rigorous discipline. This stage of his life had prepared him for the later period of turbulence in his political life, esp. the periods of physical hardship in unbearable conditions in the prisons. He acknowledged that by accepting the ideals of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda he had been able to resolve many of his inner conflicts and problems. His main struggle, as admitted by him was in the field of controlling the sex impulses. He had later wondered if it was at all necessary to greatly repress so natural instincts, but in this respect Ramakrishna Vivekananda's strict injunctions were his mainstay. He took it for granted that renunciation of lust and greed was the most important factor in spiritual journey. He had his moments of dejection and despondency but he was largely successful on account of his indomitable spirit. This struggle helped in developing his mental stamina and strength and made him a person of a dogged tenacity. If he thought that a course was to be followed, he would take that up, come what might, whatever be the price that he had to pay. This characteristic shaped his later life and was responsible for all the events that led to his emergence as the Netaji in the theater of the East Asian battlefields.

The year 1913 saw the emergence of a Subhas who had been shaped by the prevailing conditions in Calcutta. He had formed a close group of spiritual seekers in line with Ramakrishna Vivekananda ideology. All the students of this group were good in studies and also wanted to work for the welfare of the others. They formed a study circle for exploring texts on philosophy, spirituality and nationalist history and used to share knowledge. They also recruited new members to their groups and in the process met many people and made friends. They visited places of national and historical importance like Murshidabad where they paid homage to the first fighter of freedom against the British, Siraj-ud-Daula. Hemanta was also present in this group. They planned for setting up a large educational institution in line with the traditional Gurukuls. They visited Belur Math, went to meet Rabindranath Tagore, and were engaged in social activities. They shunned all political activities, esp. the revolutionary ones that were so prevalent at that time in Bengal. During that time Aurobindo Ghosh and Bagha Jatin were the most popular leaders in Bengal. Surendranath Bannerjee also had considerable influence. According to Subhas, Aurobindo's ideology helped in the better appreciation of how different Yoga paths can be harmonized to achieve the spiritual goals. In his spiritual outlook Subhas was attracted towards Sankara's philosophy of Advaita, but was not wholly appreciative of the doctrine of Maya. Vivekananda's teachings had helped shape his spiritual and Vedantic ideas in a better way. Years later he would appreciate the doctrine of Achintya Bhedabheda as propounded by the

followers of another great son of Bengal and Orissa - Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Vaishnava saint.

Subhas did not like his regular studies. The professors in Presidency college seemed to him to be devoid of any substance that could invigorate the students. He therefore devoted himself wholeheartedly in social services, like collecting edible staples by begging for distribution among poor. In doing all such outward activities like raising funds for flood relief, he got over his shyness and gradually became social. He also liked Prof. Prafulla Chandra Roy who was a well-known figure in Chemistry, for his erudition and grasp of the subject, as well as for his compassionate nature and his love for his country.

During the summer vacation Subhas returned to Cuttack. His parents were outside Cuttack. When he heard that there was a cholera outbreak in a nearby village, he and his friends jumped to the occasion, took their homeopathic medicine boxes and went for the seva or the treatment of the affected villagers. Unfortunately, the villagers, who were so accustomed to getting neglect and abuses from the officials and gentlemen alike, misinterpreted their gesture and did not fully cooperate. Moreover, this group of young, inexperienced youths could not achieve much in terms of saving lives, however noble their intentions were. But this intrepid team tried their best. They had absolutely no fear of that deadly disease. They lived and ate together and survived on bare necessities. During this period of about a week, the real picture of rural India flashed in front of Subhas - the villages that were victims of neglect, apathy, tremendous poverty, illiteracy, superstitions, suffering from poor health and unhygienic conditions. This insight led him to develop a deep bond of sympathy with his fellow countrymen who were suffering under a foreign yoke that had only contempt and negligence in store for them.

After this experience Subhas came back to Calcutta and once again renewed his search for the sannyasis (monks). He heard about a young Punjabi sadhu who was staying about 60 miles away from Calcutta in a small town near the banks of the river. This sadhu was an epitome of renunciation. He stayed under tree shades and ate whatever he obtained by chance. He meditated during hot summer days by lighting fires, thus forgetting the body consciousness. He had a loving and gentle nature. Many people came to him but he never asked for anything beyond his needs for sustenance. This sannyasi had told Subhas that his guru was to be found elsewhere. So being even more conscious of the inner dispassion that was fueled by seeing the pure life of the sadhu, Subhas set off one day by borrowing some money from a friend, in search of a Guru, in the summer of 1914. He had with him Haripada Chattopadhyay, another friend. He

never informed anybody and later wrote a small postcard to his family informing them of his decision. He went to the holy places of Mathura, Vrindavan, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Gaya, Varanasi, and also saw the historic places like Delhi and Agra. They met sadhus and sannyasis of different ashramas and tried to visit some of the Gurukuls where the inmates followed the ancient Hindu mode of studying by living in Guru's place. Everywhere they were disappointed by seeing the caste distinctions and other superstitions prevailing in these ashramas. Nowhere could they find true spirituality except for few places. And they could not find their goal, the Guru. In one of the ashramas they were refused a stay because they were thought to be revolutionaries. In another, they were denied food as they were fish eating Bengalis. In a third one they were not allowed to even drink water as some of them were not Brahmins. They had a glimpse of the reasons for the downfall and deterioration of Hinduism in India that created for it thousand years of bondage and slavery. The sannyasa ashrama, which was the mainstay of spirituality, which was the teacher, had so deviated from the pure advaitic tradition of Sankara that they had made caste distinction as one of their policies. In Vrindavan they found one sannyasi advising them to embrace the life of householder. They met the Arya Samajists, the social reformers in Vrindavan and this led the local priests to be hostile to them. They saw the bickering and the quarrel among the various sects of India, the bigotry and fanaticism prevalent among a section, and the general lack of spiritual atmosphere which they had been so desirous of finding. Only in Varanasi they had a great fortune of meeting Swami Brahmananda, the spiritual giant, who was the first president of the Ramakrishna order. A direct disciple and spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna himself, Swami Brahmananda or Rakhal Maharaj knew Subhas's family intimately. They stayed with him for few days. Subhas's parents were extremely worried and they had been searching for him everywhere. From Varanasi, Subhas returned home, much to the relief of his family. Subsequently he fell ill on account of typhoid and thus spent his time in bed, while black clouds hovered on the horizon. The first world war had begun in Europe.



Bagha Jatin and Rashbehari Bose - Two Architects of 1914 revolution. While Bagha Jatin focused on getting the consignment of arms for carrying out large scale attack on Government machinery, Rashbehari worked with Ghadar party and Berlin Committee to launch a coordinated assault from the army barracks across India. The meticulously planned conspiracy failed owing to treachery and Rashbehari had to escape to Japan while Jatin embraced martyrdom after a heroic trench battle. Image courtesy Wikipedia

The Struggle

But things do take a turn and life has so many unexpected corners. In Subhas's life the first inspiration appeared in the form of Hemanta Sarkar, whom, a great man described in later life as his "bosom friend.". Benimadhab Das, who was in Krishnanagar school, wrote a letter to Subhas asking him to take care of his student Hemanta. Hemanta and Subhas met in 1912 and soon liked each other. Benimadhab was glad to know that. Hemanta was affiliated with a group in Calcutta that worked secretly in political activities. Through him, Subhas came in touch with this group and got to know about their activities.

After coming back to Presidency College Subhas got caught in the vortex of politics. So far he did not have any strong political viewpoint. He did not align with the viewpoints of the revolutionaries to carry out terror strikes. He had more appetite for the non-violent measures. He did not have much idea as to how the national consciousness would develop. His idea was that it would come through cultural renaissance and mass education. He also believed that India should have its own administration under British protection. But the ideas were not well developed. Two things shaped his political ideas.

One was the treatment of the white men towards the natives and the other was the world war. He used to encounter in his daily lives the first, while commuting, in the buses and trams where the natives were treated harshly, and abuses, kicks and insults were hurled at them, including at their womenfolk, by the ruling classes. Any protest would land the native in jail and their fear of the white men prevented them from retaliating. But slowly the youth rebelled.

One needs to look into the contemporary environment to develop more ideas about the transformation process. The future of the nation was possibly decided in 1893 in the parliament of religions when a young enlightened monk Swami Vivekananda taught his countrymen that they were not inferior, but rather they had a very rich inheritance and legacy that they had forgotten. The same monk, on coming back to India thundered across, from Colombo to Almora, exhorting the youth to Arise, Awake and Stop Not till the goal was reached - *uttisthita jagrata, prapya varan nibodhata* (Kathaponishad). Youth of India soon awoke from the self-hypnotism. During the plague outbreak in Pune, commissioner W. C Rand was killed for his mistreatment of the natives. Chapekar brothers, the perpetrators, were sent to the gallows and Balgangadhar Tilak, their mentor, became the marked enemy of the empire. In 1901, the same monk, who was on a tour to East Bengal, had inspired a group of young men to take up arms for the protection of the country. One of them was Hemchandra Ghosh, who was an indisputable leader of the Anushilon Samity and later Mukti Sangha and Bengal Volunteers, and was a close associate of Subhas in his later years. In the larger scheme of the Universe, things were moving rapidly. Sister Nivedita, an Irish disciple of the monk Vivekananda, mentored a group of revolutionaries against the injustice of the British Government, esp. that of Curzon who engineered the partition of Bengal. This enforced partition triggered a nationwide protest and the subsequent oppressive measures enraged the people and political leaders alike. The moderates of the congress under Dadabhoi Naoroji and Gopalkrishna Gokhale were fast losing ground to the more militant section led by Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and Lala Lajpat Rai. Aurobindo Ghosh and his brother Barindra Kumar Ghosh were instrumental in organizing the revolutionaries by inspiring the Bengali students who had been at the forefront of the anti partition movement. The Anushilon Samity, a secret group had been formed in 1902 to mentor and equip the revolutionaries by P.N Mitra, and later Bagha Jatin formed a splinter Jugantar group. The first to strike on behalf of the revolutionaries was an eighteen-year-old lad, Khudiram Bose, and his friend Prafulla Chaki who were deputed to kill the notorious magistrate Kingsford in Muzaffarpur in 1908. Kingsford survived the attack but in a stroke of misfortune two British ladies were killed. Khudiram was caught and was hanged and Prafulla shot himself before being

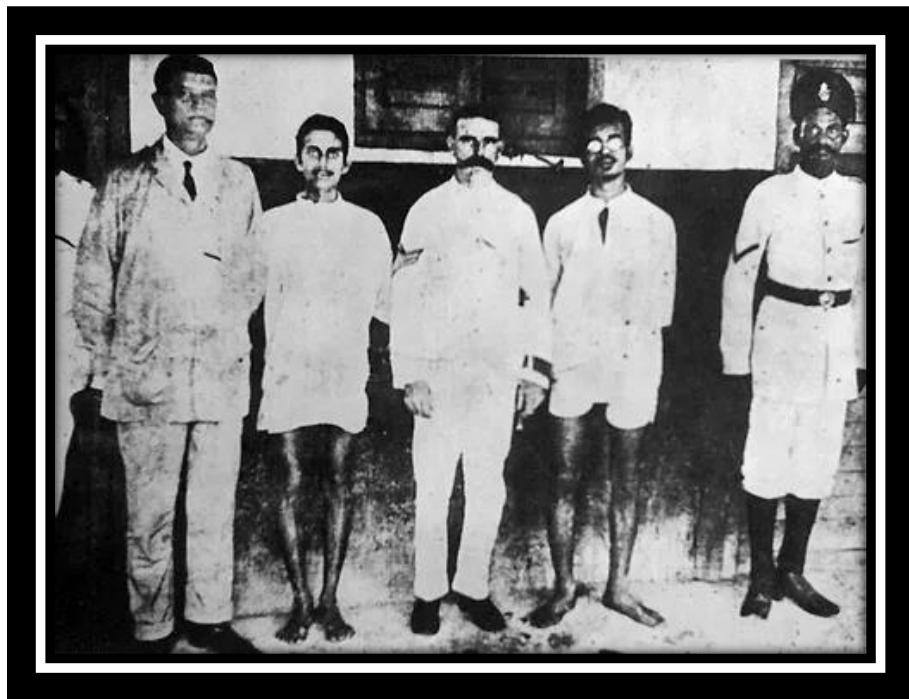
caught. The police soon nailed down the conspiracy and caught Barindra and several other revolutionaries in the Maniktolla bomb case. Aurobindo, who was at that time editor of the *Bande Mataram* publication, was arrested. He was dubbed as the enemy number one and British police left no stones unturned to hang him in the Alipore Bomb Case. But two events saved Aurobindo from the gallows. One was that a traitor named Narendranath Gosai who had become an approver, was killed in the jail hospital by two young revolutionaries - Satyen Bose and Kanailal Datta. Satyen and Kanai were sent to the gallows and they went quite cheerfully. The other was that Aurobindo's lawyer was a young barrister named Chittaranjan Das, an extraordinary person who would later leave his huge income and property to lead the freedom movement in Bengal, form the Swarajists as separate group from Congress, give Gandhiji a competition in terms of popularity and political acumen, and become the political guru and mentor of Subhas Chandra Bose. He said in his parting argument in the court - *"My appeal to you therefore is that a man like this who is being charged with the offences imputed to him stands not only before the bar in this Court but stands before the bar of the High Court of History and my appeal to you is this: That long after this controversy is hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India, but across distant seas and lands."* Aurobindo was set free but Barindra, Ullaskar Datta and several others served deportation to the notorious cellular jail in the Andamans. During this phase of his life Aurobindo became spiritually enlightened. Subsequently Aurobindo withdrew himself from political activities, escaped to the French occupied Pondicherry and became a Yogi.

Family Environment and Young Subhas's Ideals

Subhas's relationship with his mother Prabhavati Devi can be discussed now. He had great respect for his mother, who managed such a huge family and yet could find time for her children. She was the typical Indian woman of that age, pious, devoted, culturally accomplished, wise, loving mother and dutiful wife. "Subi" was her favourite. Subhas wrote many letters to her, some of which were full of wisdom rare for a boy of that age. As claimed in his book *Indian Pilgrim*, Subhas was an introvert and he developed a single track mind. He made Brahmacharya or celibacy his goal of life and had innumerable struggles to keep away the thoughts of sexual desires from his mind. That he succeeded was beyond any doubt. During the period of his intense sadhana he did not like the company of his teachers, barring a few who were devotees of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. He even had little respect for the preachers who had not renounced

their worldly lives, like the Kulguru (the family preceptor) of his parents. He said that by reading Vivekananda he was able to get rid of all superstitions and thus developed the strength of mind. He practised Yoga to get rid of dreams pertaining to fear and anxiety, carnal desires etc. His family was largely broad minded and had a close association with people from other religions, esp. the Muslims. Subhas therefore had developed a liberal view and could easily cultivate good relationship with everyone. He did not have any orthodoxy or narrow mindedness in matters of religion. Subhas was however rebel in nature. In many cases he went against the wishes of his parents. He did not care about any taboos, esp. caste barriers. When he single-mindedly pursued spiritual life, his parents and family members who had high hopes on him, were disappointed, esp. as his studies were impacted. His parents thought that probably if he moved to Calcutta he would be cured of his obsession with a spiritual life. Despite all the extra-curricular activities undertaken by him that left him little space for serious academic work, Subhas appeared in the Entrance (Xth standard) examination and earned the second place. His parents were once again happy. After that he was sent to Calcutta to further pursue his studies.







From Top: Khudiram Bose, Barrister Chittaranjan Das, Kanailal Datta, Satyen Bose & Kanailal after assassinating Naren Gosai, Prafulla Chaki and Barindra Kumar Ghosh - image courtesy Wikipedia. Khudiram and Prafulla Chaki wanted to kill the notorious district magistrate Kingsford but ended up killing two European ladies. Khudiram, a young boy of 18 years, was sent to the gallows. In the Alipore bomb case that followed, Kanailal and Satyen shot dead traitor Naren Gosai in the prison hospital in a daring attempt to save Aurobindo. A young barrister Chittaranjan's passionate appeal and defence of Aurobindo won history's recognition.

The mantle of revolutionary movement was taken up by two other leaders - the first of them was Jatindranath Mukherjee, also called Bagha Jatin, as he single handedly fought and killed a tiger. Bagha Jatin, an extra ordinary gentleman, was an organizer per excellence and he soon set up a network of revolutionary activities across Bengal, remaining behind the scene as a Government worker. A series of attacks rattled the Bengal Government. The killing of Deputy Superintendent of Police Samsul Alam by Biren Datta Gupta and Public Prosecutor Ashutosh Biswas by Charu Bose, were daring acts planned and coordinated by Jatin. In 1910 he was caught in the Howrah conspiracy case but was let go in the absence of any evidence. Jatin worked silently in strengthening the revolutionary organizations through the Jugantar network. In 1911, because of the revolutionary activities, the British Government shifted the capital from Calcutta to Delhi. But the activities continued unabated. The Rodda arms heist in 1914 was a major success in the history of armed revolutionary activities. The architects included Haridas Datta, Srish Mitra, Bipin Behari Ganguli, Prabhudayal Himmatsinghka, Srish Pal, Anukul Mukherjee, Girin Bannerjee and the revolutionaries of Jugantar, Atmonnati Samity, Anushilon Samity and Mukti Sangha. It was a well-coordinated and synchronized activity that also had Jatin's touch, as he was the leader coordinator among all the various groups that operated. The Mauser pistols and the bullets looted

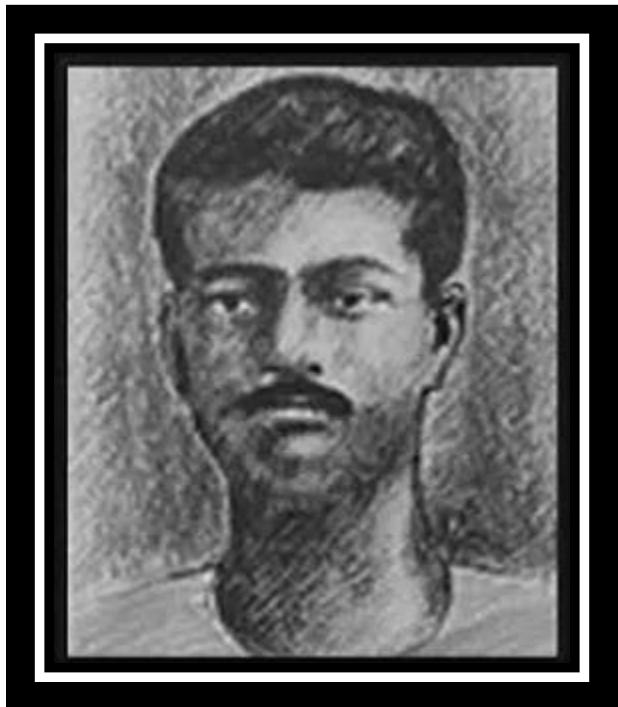
with the help of a single bullock cart were later used to fuel many revolutionary activities, including the battle in Balasore, and the arms were used in the Kakori conspiracy case years later.

The second important leader who emerged from the shadows to organize an attack on Lord Hardinge in 1912 was none other than Rashbehari Bose. Rashbehari, together with the fellow revolutionaries like Vishnu Pingle and Sachindranath Sanyal, with the help of Ghadar party, tried to organize a mass uprising of the Indian army men across the barracks and cantonments in February 1914 in Singapore, Banaras, Punjab and other regions. Jatindranath had sought help from Germany to send a consignment of arms for triggering a war with the British and was supposed to receive the consignment in the Orissa coast. Jatin had earlier hatched a similar plan to rouse the Sikhs and Jat soldiers in the Eastern Command to mutiny. The coordinated plans failed owing to betrayal, and Pingle, Sanyal and other Ghadar party members were arrested and Pingle and Ghadar party leaders like Kartar Singh were hanged, while Sanyal was deported to the Andamans. Many soldiers in the barracks lost their lives esp. in Singapore where the rebellion was almost successful. Rashbehari had made a daring escape to Japan and with the help of Mitusuyo Toyama of the Black Dragon society he could eventually settle in Japan and carry out his struggles to enlist the help of East Asia for the Indian cause. Many years later the paths of Rashbehari and Subhas Chandra Bose would cross and they would embrace each other. About Jatindranath, a young Subhas asked his friend Hemanta, whether he was a "Mukta Purush", an enlightened being. Subhas believed that only an enlightened person would be able to lead India to freedom. Hemanta had replied that Jatin was the living personification of Gita. The younger Subhas in 1908 was so inspired and affected by the death sentence of Khudiram Bose that he led the students of his school hostel to observe a day of "arandhan" or "no cooking". The silent protest was supported by head master Benimadhab Das, but when the authorities heard it, they were furious and this was believed to be one of the reasons for the transfer order of Benimadhab from Cuttack.

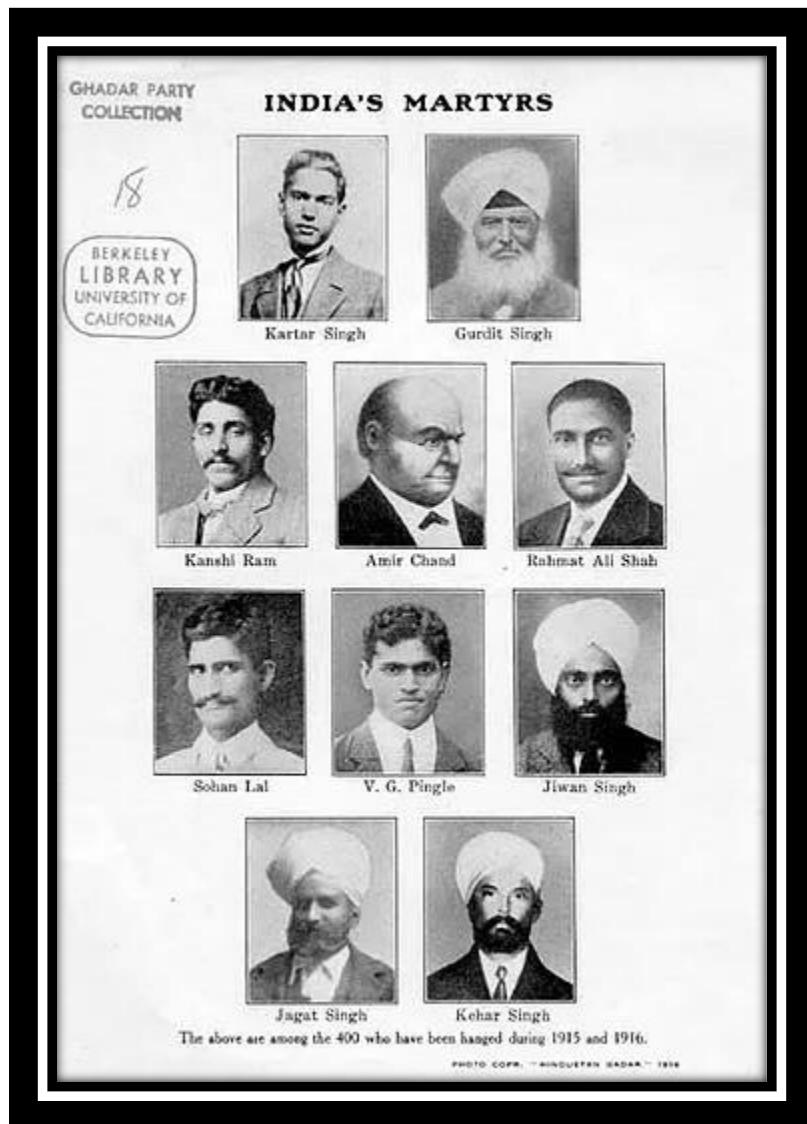
Such was the condition of Bengal and Calcutta when Subhas was searching for his destiny. It was quite natural therefore that the future leader of India would be caught in the whirlwinds and his entire perspective would change. The British Government would become his mortal enemy and his country would become his priority number one in life, at the expense of everything else, including his family and career. But the most unfortunate incident which helped shape his direction was a terrible injustice meted out to him by the British authorities when he had committed no wrong.



Rashbehari and wife Toshiko. Rashbehari continued his anti-British activities from Japan and worked tirelessly to raise awareness among East Asian nations for India's struggle. He received cooperation from Black Dragon Society of Japan. His wife Toshiko supported him wholeheartedly even at the cost of her own health. Image courtesy Wikipedia



Sachindranath Sanyal, right hand man of Rashbehari in carrying out the revolution of 1914. Eventually caught and deported. Continued his anti-British activities and created Hindustan Republican Army. Image courtesy twitter



Ghadarites - the martyr of 1914 revolution. Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, Kartar Singh helped Rashbehari actively in coordinating the 1914 revolution. Image courtesy Wikipedia

"If we want to make India really great, we must build up a political democracy on the pedestal of a democratic society. Privileges based on birth, caste or creed should go, and equal opportunities should be thrown open to all irrespective of caste, creed or religion."

Road Less Travelled

A Decisive Moment

Subhas Chandra Bose in Presidency College and thereafter - Quitting Indian Civil Service

Oaten Episode - "Did I once suffer, Subhas, at your hands?"

Subhas witnessed a new fact of life. In Calcutta he encountered the mistreatment of the natives in the hands of the Englishmen. When they had endured the insults and abuses those abuses would go on increasing. However, if perchance some of the Indians countered the mischievous Englishmen they would retract. In most cases the law and the courts were with the Englishmen. These kind of mistreatment and injustices greatly agitated young Subhas. During the wars, while being bedridden, Subhas did an intense soul searching, was it ever possible for the Indians to govern India independently? The answer that he got was yes, it was imperative. His studies were impacted as a result of all the disruptions and in I.A he did not do that well. He took philosophy honours in B.A and he genuinely loved that subject. He became interested in Western philosophy and also started to promote the materialistic viewpoints, much to the chagrin of his erstwhile more conservative group. But there occurred an incident in 1916 which changed his life forever. One professor E. F Oaten was extremely disrespectful towards Indian culture and its people. One day he had manhandled few students on flimsy grounds. Subhas as the leader of the students went to the principal James and asked for an apology from Oaten. But the principal said that it was not possible for him to force Oaten to apologize for his behaviour. Subhas and the students then decided to call for a strike. All the students stayed away from the class. None of them budged even when they were fined for being absent. The strike of the students of Presidency College became a sensational news item across the city. On the second day of the strike the authorities asked Oaten to settle the matter. Oaten also agreed and he discussed and settled it with a few student representatives. After a few months Oaten again started misbehaving with the students and it was reported that he had badly beaten a first-year student. The students got mad as the authorities were unable to take any action. So they decided to take the matter in their own hands. Oaten was pushed from the front and that created a major hue and cry. Subhas Chandra Bose was not directly involved but he was made a scapegoat, being the student leader. The Government decided to close down Presidency College and formed an investigative committee. The principal

was enraged by the unilateral decision of the Government and apparently misbehaved with the education ministry. Principal was suspended but he wielded his rod of chastisement before his suspension was effective. He called Subhas and suspended him from Presidency College. The investigative committee supported his decision. Even the Calcutta University had expelled Subhas and all avenues of his getting higher education was closed. The president of that committee was Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee. The committee had asked Subhas if it was proper to have beaten Oaten. Subhas said that it was improper conduct but he supported the students on the ground the students had been enraged by the deliberate insults and abuses hurled at them over a period. After being expelled from the Calcutta University Subhas came back to Cuttack. Years later, a great man while recounting that incident gave a completely different perspective. Somebody (a lady) had requested Subhas to own up on the behalf of somebody else (a fellow student). Sir Ashutosh got wind of it and tried his best to save Subhas by prodding him to reveal the whole episode. But Subhas had given his word to that "somebody" and hence he kept quiet and took the blame on himself. He had read in Mahabharata that if telling truth led to somebody else's danger, better keep quiet. This is the incident that taught him that leadership means sacrifice. A leader has to learn to give everything for an ideal. He realized later that this incident was actually a boon for him as it decided the course of his whole life.

The Fallout - Impact on Academic Career

Subhas's parents and family members tacitly supported him throughout his ordeal. However, his earlier group of friends did not. His education and career became uncertain. His father was against his traveling to overseas for education without first getting rid of the infamy caused by the incident in Presidency. From 1916 to 1917 he devoted his time in nursing poor cholera patients by going to their villages and in the hospitals. He never shied away even from washing them and was careless about personal safety. Sometimes he had to take responsibility of their last rites as well which he gladly did. He also worked actively for organizing students and youth for the sake of development of the country. He organized ritualistic Durga Puja, went to historical places and did a lot of introspection. Such reflections helped him in discovering his inner secrets in the dark chambers of his minds, his desires and tendencies that were hidden from himself, and helped him in conquering them. He also conquered his deepest and darkest fears that manifested in his dreams.

After about one year he came back to Calcutta to try his luck again. He wanted to join the army but was rejected on account of his poor eyesight. Then the University, mainly

through the personal intervention of Sir Ashutosh, decided to take him back. He talked to the principal of Scottish Church College and got admitted there in philosophy honours. He had to get a consent note from the principal of the Presidency college Mr. Wordsworth. With the help of Mejda Sarat Bose, that could be done and Subhas was back pursuing his B.A honours. By that time, he lost more than a year. He also got himself enlisted in a different kind of pursuit - University unit of the India defense force. Doctor Suresh Sarbadhikary was encouraging Indian students to be a part of this voluntary force. Subhas got trained in the disciplined army life and he thoroughly enjoyed the experience. He got a sense of esprit de corps and a taste of the life of a soldier. He learned to fire rifles. His commanding officer was a rough army man named Gray. As soldier Subhas enjoyed certain privileges which were not possible for an ordinary Indian civilian. But more than that he was really happy with that life. It seemed to him that this was the life (of soldiers) that he wanted.

In B.A final exam he got first class. But he wanted to study experimental psychology in M.A. However his father and brother had decided to send him to England to study for I.C.S. Subhas wanted to go to England but did not want to become I.C.S as it would mean that he would have to work under British Government. He then thought that he might not clear the exam, so he decided to go to London anyway.



In England - Preparing for ICS

In 1919 Subhas set sail for Cambridge. A few months back the Jallianwala Bagh episode had taken place where British police under Michael O Dyer had fired on a crowd of unarmed Indians, women and children included, and killed thousands. But Subhas had no concrete information about it since information flow was restricted from Punjab, the province where such a genocide took place. In the ship he was joined by other Indian students and they had a fun time together, with the occasional irritating snobbish behavior by the British towards the natives. It took the ship about 5 weeks to reach Tillsbury, because of a coal strike in the ports. When Subhas finally reached England, he was advised to go to the Cambridge for his admission. Subhas met Redeway who had looked into the matter of his admission very leniently and allowed him to get admitted in that term itself to avoid any further delay. Subhas was surprised by seeing the freedom and the respect that the students here enjoyed in comparison with his experiences in Calcutta. He had a whole lot of subjects to prepare in an incredibly short time. He later narrated his experiences of observing the Union society debates where parliament members and politicians of Britain would participate in debates with the students. He saw that the British were not sympathetic to India's struggle. British students had also maintained an air of superiority and kept themselves aloof from the Indian students. He also saw the discrimination against the Indians and the anger and the bitter feelings among the Indian students as a result. When the Indian students had applied for admission in University officer's training core, British Indian authorities objected and therefore they could not get the opportunity. The matter was escalated to the then India secretary who expressed his helplessness. Subhas was of the opinion that Indian students should come to Britain after at least doing their graduation because otherwise they ran the risk of forgetting their own culture and blindly imitating the Western culture.

Indian Freedom Movement - 1917 to 1919. From Home Rule to Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

The fortunes of Indian politics, in the meanwhile, had changed irrevocably. In 1907 after the split of Surat Congress, the Congress of the moderates had debarred the so-called extremists or the more ardent Nationalists. Government had also decided to stamp the leaders out. Lala Lajpat Roy was deported and Aurobindo Ghosh took to sannyasa. Tilak was imprisoned for six years in 1908. In the meanwhile, revolutionary activities increased by leaps and bounds. Muslim League was formed and had its first meeting in 1907. The seed of divisive politics had been sown. Muslim League in 1913 had adopted a resolution to accept self-Government under British crown and sought to achieve it by promoting national unity and cooperation. Congress welcomed it. However Muslim

League was fully committed to its communal agenda as it wanted to only further the interests of the Muslim community. Dr. R.C Majumdar writes that the Muslims refused to join the Hindus in a common political programme because they believed that their interest would be better served by aligning with the British. But they were ready to sacrifice that stance only if Islam was under threat from the British rule as was evident during the Khilafat movement. The release of Tilak in 1914 brought back the Nationalists into Indian political mainstream. . Annie Besant took the initiative of reuniting Congress by meeting Tilak and Gokhale. But Gokhale backtracked when he learnt that Tilak and his followers would not compromise on their views. Gopalkrishna Gokhale and Phirozeshah Mehta died in 1915, and thereby the moderates were greatly weakened. After Gokhale's death the reentry of the Nationalists could be made possible and in 1916, in the Lucknow Congress, the moderates and the nationalists came together for the first time after 1907. Tilak received a royal reception. Annie Besant had made a formal announcement about the Home Rule League in her paper New India in 1915. The objective of the League was Home Rule for India. Moderates did not like the resolution of Home Rule. Home Rule League was inaugurated in 1916 and soon had its branch in the different cities of India. Annie Besant took the help of the organization of the Theosophical society and set up Home Rule branches, made extensive tour and gave lectures. She had been able to stir the country by her superb oratory skills. Many eminent leaders like Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru joined the Home Rule League. Tilak had also taken up the idea of the Home Rule League. He wrote stirring articles in its support in his paper Maratha and undertook lecture tours in 1916 for educating the masses on the Home Rule. Main idea of Home Rule was forming a Government under the British Empire in which the rule of bureaucracy would be replaced by an administration for the people. Tilak earned the epithet Lokmanya. Annie Besant declared in 1917 that "the condition of India's loyalty (to England in the world war) is India's freedom. India demands Home Rule because Freedom is the birthright of every nation." Mrs. Besant and Tilak acted in cooperation. Tilak and Besant held many triumphant tours and ensured a lot of support for the Nationalist camps and according to Dr. R.C Majumdar, the "Home Rule movement spread like wildfire. Two characteristics of it were the participation of women and the religious colouring given to it." Government, noticing the popularity of the movement, tried to muzzle it forcefully. Mrs. Besant was interned. When the movement was intensified, the British Secretary of State, Montagu, promised responsible government as the goal of British policy of India. This prompted Home Rule League and Congress to drop the idea of Passive Resistance. Tilak continued with the movement and even Muslim leaders like Jinnah and Ali brothers joined it. Home Rule League also formed offices in Britain and campaigned in America. Many eminent English and American spoke on behalf of self-

Government for India. The Labour Party conference in 1918 passed a resolution favouring Home Rule for India.

Writes Dr. R.C Majumdar in the History of Freedom Movement of India Volume 3, "The year 1919 may be looked upon as an annus mirabilis which marked a definite stage in the history of India's struggle for freedom. It was memorable for four outstanding events which shaped India's future relations with Britain. These are:

1. The Rowlatt Bills and their consequence—the reign of terror in the Panjab, culminating in Jallianwala Bagh massacre and barbarous enforcement of martial law in the Panjab.
2. The emergence of M. K. Gandhi of Satyagraha fame in South Africa as the political leader in India.
3. The passing of the Government of India Act on the basis of the Montagu Chelmsford Report.
4. Revival of Pan-Islamism as a force in Indian politics.

The Rowlatt bill sought to curb the revolutionary activities using brute force and took away almost all legal rights from the ordinary citizen being prosecuted. This was opposed throughout the country. This act brought in its wake a new leader, Mohandas Gandhi, who had returned from South Africa and led the peasant movements in Kheda and Champaran districts in a new style which he called as Satyagraha. He was mentored by Gokhale whom he regarded as his political guru. Gandhi had opposed the idea of Home Rule during war time and had committed his support to the British Government in their war effort, in anticipation for some concession for India in the post-World War scenario. He now declared satyagraha against the Rowlatt bill. Gandhi had proposed for a general hartal or cessation of work on April 6. His appeal had a great response all over India. It started in Delhi on March 30. Gandhi was invited to Lahore and Amritsar. Gandhi was prohibited from entering Punjab province and he was sent back by police escort. In Delhi there were police firings and several people were killed. English doctors and nurses refused to treat the "rebels", according to the testimony of Swami Sraddhanand. Disturbances broke out in Bombay and Ahmedabad. Gandhi suspended satyagraha on account of the violent acts of public and termed his action to launch a civil disobedience a "Himalayan Miscalculation".

In Punjab Lt. Governor Michael O' Dwyer, who had been ruthless throughout his tenure, gagging vernacular press, interning people without proper charges against them, collecting funds forcefully and recruiting people for the army, had caused much popular resentment. Agitation had broken out in Lahore over Gandhi's perceived arrest and one student was killed. In Amritsar, two popular leaders Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew were arrested and faced deportation. A spontaneous hartal was observed. Police fired indiscriminately on a peaceful crowd in the Hall Gate Bridge who had mainly gathered for the Baisakhi festival. People burst into protests. Then some unruly elements created mayhem by murdering few Europeans and attacking Government institutions. Brigadier General Dyer took charge on 11th April and a defacto Martial Law was imposed. He issued a proclamation prohibiting all meetings and gatherings. On 12th April a public meeting was to be held in Jallianwala Bagh. Dyer ordered his troops to fire on the unarmed crowd without warning. The troops fired on the crowd till their ammunition was exhausted. Thousands including many women and children were killed in one of the worst, deliberate massacres perpetrated by the British raj, though the official figures are much less at 379. At least one Britisher, C. F. Andrews, described Dyer's act as "a cold and calculated massacre", and "an unspeakable disgrace, indefensible, unpardonable, inexcusable." Dyer did not even bother about the wounded who were left to die. Dyer did not stop at that. His Martial Law would enable him to cut off water and electricity supply, would flog anybody and would order people to crawl on their belly. Dyer had his worthy colleague in Doveton of Kasur who committed almost the same atrocities on people. Other military officers taking charges elsewhere like Lyallpur and Lahore, Col. O Brien and Col. Johnson followed the hallowed footsteps or went further ahead in their efforts to suppress rebellions. Bombs were dropped on the crowd from airplanes and machine guns were fired in some places of Punjab. writes Dr. Majumdar, "Lt. Dodkins, R. A. F., machine-gunned twenty peaceful peasants working in the field. He dropped a bomb on another party in front of a house, simply because a man was addressing them. The mentality of these officers, who can only be regarded as degraded specimens of humanity of brutish nature, may be construed from the following report of Carberry's evidence:" Major Carberry, R. A. F., bombed a party of people because he thought they were rioters. The crowd was running away and he fired to disperse them. As the crowd dispersed, he fired machine gun into the village itself."

For eight months the Government of India tried hush up the horrible atrocities perpetrated in the Punjab. But the news of the terrible events slowly percolated to other parts of India and a wave of horror and indignation swept the country from one end to the other. The great poet Rabindranath Tagore relinquished his Knighthood as a

measure of protest and wrote a strong but dignified letter to the Viceroy, "giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen surprised into a dumb anguish of terror."



Balgandhar Tilak, the rebel who rejuvenated the spirit of Nationalism and was deported to Mandalay prison. Later promoted Home Rule movement. Image courtesy Wikipedia



Massacre at Jallianwala Bagh by O' Dyer and his army. Unofficially more than thousand civilians were killed and many thousands injured as they had no escape route. O' Dyer was

exonerated by Britain despite the dastardly act. what more, European civil population raised contribution to assist this mass murderer. Image courtesy India Today

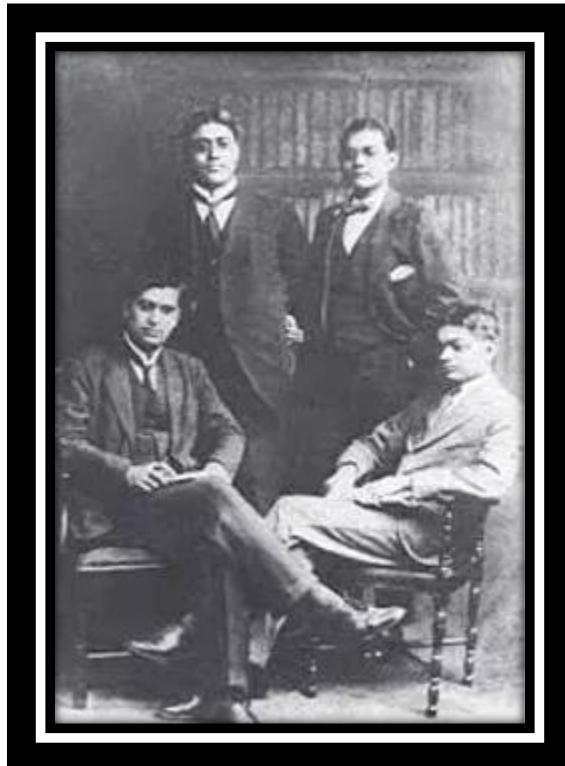
One ICS Less - I Quit the Most Lucrative Career for my Motherland

Such was the condition of the country when Subhas Chandra Bose left for studying ICS and it was but natural when he came to know if the ground realities the whole idea of serving the British administration in India would be loathsome to him.

Subhas started preparing for the tough ICS examination from the beginning of 1920. He had barely seven months. He laboured but thought that he had not been prepared and had not done well. When the results were out it appeared that he stood fourth. He informed his family about his success. However now he had the real dilemma. Whether to accept or not to accept the post. He knew of various people who, despite having higher ideals, had not been able to pursue them once they were yoked to the ICS job. He finally decided that it was impossible for him to work for his goals from within the ICS. He wrote a long mail to Mejda Sarat Bose and decided to resign from ICS. In this respect Aurobindo Ghosh was his role model. He thought that to become independent the country had to go through various hardships and sacrifices. He discussed his plan with Mr. Redeway who wholeheartedly supported him. Only thought that he had was that his father and mother should not feel bad or disappointed by his action. He also planned to join the ongoing non-cooperation movement after returning to his country. His decision created a furor in India office. But when one is determined to pursue a higher goal, no amount of coaxing, cajoling or other overtures would unsettle him. Subhas took the return vessel to Indian and landed in Bombay on 16 July, 1921 and went to meet Mahatma Gandhi on the same day.

Dilip Kumar Roy, who was in Cambridge at that time together with Kshitij and Subhas, wrote about Subhas's long inner struggles, particularly how he was affected by the letters from his family on the issue of quitting ICS. Naturally Janaki Nath Bose was very upset. But no amount of remonstrances could dislodge Subhas from his avowed goal, of not serving two masters. Dilip also remembers how Subhas liked staying with the family of Dr. N.R Dharamvir in Manchester whose English wife was very sympathetic to these young boys and became their beloved Didi. Remembers Dilip, "she was one English women to whom he (Subhas) had ever opened up emotionally." A touching scene was enacted when Subhas and his friends had left Manchester. "Suddenly as the train whistled, Mrs. Dharamvir flung into our laps two little parcels." They contained a few nuts and other condiments, seeing which Subhas fondly remarked, "women, will

always be women", implying the presence of inherent motherliness in all women across the world.



Subhas Chandra Bose in London, with Dilip Kumar Roy and others, while preparing for ICS. Image courtesy Wikiwand

“What greater solace can there be than the feeling that one has lived and died for a principle? What higher satisfaction can a man possess than the knowledge that his spirit will beget kindred spirits to carry on his unfinished task?”

Motherland Beacons – Arrival on Stage

Unfolding of a Plan - Meeting M.K Gandhi

Subhas returned to India on July 16, 1921. In the same ship he had Rabindranath Tagore as a co-passenger. Subhas had left India on Sep 15 1919, a few days after the conclusion of world war 1. Along with occupying the fourth position in ICS, he had also obtained tripos in mental and moral sciences from Cambridge. On 16th July his ship had come to the Mumbai port and on the same day he met Gandhiji. In February 1920

he had started corresponding with Chittaranjan Das, the well-known barrister who had stood for Aurobindo Ghosh in Alipore case in 1908. Chittaranjan was now the most prominent leader in Bengal. "I should like to know what work you may be able to allot to me in this great programme of national service. Of education and intelligence I have but little, but I believe I have the enthusiasm of youth. I am a bachelor. As regards my education I have read something of philosophy because that was my honours subject in Calcutta and I am doing the same subject in my Tripos here. Thanks to the Civil Services Examination, I have had an all-round education up to a certain standard...But I have the feeling that on my return to my country, I should be able to take up two kinds of work, teaching in college and writing for newspapers."

In March he wrote another letter to C.R Das in which he chalked out a plan for himself around education and social service. Thus, we find that Subhas Bose was now graduating from a youth in search of his destiny to one who had finally decided his goal and aim and was ready to give up everything, a lucrative career, family and friends for the sake of jumping to an idealism which he wanted to pursue with a single point determination for the rest of his life. In England for the first time Subhas experienced how people lived in a free country and he realized the importance of freedom by comparing it to the wretched condition in his own country. For the first time he participated in meaningful debates and discussions which were intellectually stimulating. He made friends outside his friends' circle in Calcutta. He became aware of the unique problems faced by India and his determination to serve his motherland was shaped by his experience of what development and progress would mean for country.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had come back from South Africa in 1914 and had joined Indian National Congress in 1915. In Congress he was being mentored by Gopalkrishna Gokhale. During first world war he had recruited Indian soldiers for the war effort. His breakthrough in Indian politics came with the Kheda and Champaran agitations in 1917. In 1919 the notorious Rowlatt Act was passed and Gandhiji and Congress discovered that in return for their support to the British in World War 1, they got nothing. A civil disobedience was followed against the Rowlatt Act in Punjab and in April 1919, in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, British soldiers under the order of Reginald Dyer opened fire on a large group of peaceful population that included a large number of women and children, killing thousands. This barbaric killing drew protests from across the world, though British men and women raised subscriptions for helping Dyer. Dyer was exonerated. Gandhiji now started the non-cooperation movement in his demand for Swaraj and tried to bring the Muslims on the same platform by linking the issue of

Khilafat or the displacement of the Caliphate in Turkey, an issue which was close to the Muslims. In 1921 he organized Congress and advocated swadeshi or homespun khadi garments using spinning wheels and boycott of foreign goods. It was at this critical juncture that Subhas Chandra Bose, the young ICS, met him and interviewed him on his plan for India.



Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das renounced a huge income and all his assets to steer non-cooperation movement in Bengal and became the political guru of Subhas Chandra Bose.

Image courtesy: Wikipedia



Mahatma Gandhi had returned to India in 1915 after gaining reputation for his Satyagraha movement in South Africa. He was mentored by Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Soon he launched Satyagraha in Kheda and Champaran and emerged as the undisputed leader of Indian National Movement. His emphasis on Non-Violence means to fight British lent him a huge acceptability among the masses. He led the movement against Rowlatt Act from the front and started Non-cooperation movement in 1920 that was hugely successful until its premature withdrawal. Image courtesy: Wikipedia



Subhas Chandra Bose and Calcutta Municipal Corporation. Image courtesy: Facebook Discussion Group - Netaji

Beginning of political innings of Subhas Chandra Bose, Boycott of the visit of Prince of Wales

Plunge into Politics - Deshbandhu Chittaranjan and Subhas - The Guru and his worthy disciple

Gandhiji was staying in the Laburnum Road and Subhas on meeting him engaged in a long conversation about his programmes and plans. He was not satisfied with the interview as he thought that Gandhiji did not have any concrete plan of India's future beyond the immediate activities. Gandhiji also sensed his disappointment and advised him to contact Chittaranjan Das. After meeting C.R Das in Calcutta, Subhas was satisfied and decided to dedicate his heart and soul to the non-cooperation movement that had been started by Gandhiji and was being spearheaded by C.R Das in Bengal. Subhas met C.R Das to find that he was not the same man earning thousands in days and spending the same in hours. C.R Das was a king of the youth, he could understand their mindset and he could get their allegiance as well. He could give everything that he had and also demanded everything that his followers could give him. Subhas thus put himself under C.R Das whom he would be following, though not blindly, for often they would argue on the methods and means, but in principle. C.R Das understood Subhas very well, he was perhaps the only person who could do so. He put Subhas in charge

of the nationalization of education. Subhas became the principal of the Bengal National college. He also became the captain of the National Volunteer Corps, which he immensely liked as it gave him opportunity to build the youth of Bengal along the lines of army. He was also the Chief Publicity Officer of the Congress in Bengal. So efficiently he proved his mettle that even the Government took notice. Subhas set to work with the goal of building of character of the youth. So ably he organized the propaganda on behalf of Congress that the Statesman, the leading daily of the Anglo Indians remarked that Congress had got one of the most competent men whom the Government had lost. Chittaranjan introduced Subhas to all the important Congress leaders who came to a working committee session in September 1921. Subhas also took up the responsibility of negotiating a settlement between ex-revolutionaries and Congress so as to enlist their cooperation in the ongoing agitation. His sincerity and purposeful overtures won the day for him. Subhas became a lifelong and a trusted friend of the revolutionaries across India. This made him the arch enemy of the British police and the intelligence.

The first test of Subhas as an organizer came in December 1921. The Prince of Wales was visiting India.

Gandhiji wanted a complete boycott of this visit. The Prince landed in Bombay on 17 Nov and the whole country had observed Hartal or complete strike. It was also decided to observe Hartal on 24 Dec, the day Prince was supposed to visit Calcutta. Subhas worked tirelessly to make the hartal a success. At the same time he organized a large volunteer force to cater to the emergency needs of people who would be travelling, the needs of sick and others who would have to go to the hospitals etc. Cars were kept to ferry such people with special stickers on them. Government soon got the wind and they declared the volunteer corps as illegal. Now Chittaranjan Das showed his great spirit of renunciation - a leader should be the first to sacrifice. His family members first courted arrest while picketing, starting with his son Chiraranjan or Bhombal. Next was the turn of Basanti Devi, his wife, and other ladies of his household including his sister. When Basanti Devi was arrested even the police constables were said to be so much enraged by it that the Government had to increase their salary to pacify them. The pressure on the Government mounted and the police were forced to release Basanti Devi and the other ladies, though they soon arrested Deshbandhu, Subhas Chandra, J.M Sengupta and Birendra Nath Sasmal. Other Congress leaders were arrested on Dec 10. They were sentenced for 6 months imprisonment and were lodged in Alipore prison. "Just 6 months? Have I stolen a chicken?" was the belligerent reply of Subhas to the judge. Little did Subhas realize that it was the beginning of a long journey. Between 1921 and 1941 when he left India, Subhas was imprisoned eleven times, was sent to the second most notorious prison, that of Mandalay, and had to endure terrible agony. But this one

son of India was steadfast and most obstinate, he would neither bend nor break. In these six months Subhas got opportunity to serve his guru for 6 months in the prison. The foods brought by Basanti Devi for Chittaranjan were shared with all his associates and they lived happily as a family.

End of Non-Cooperation, Rise of Swaraj Party of Deshbandhu, Subhas as Chief Executive Officer

Ascent of Swaraj Party

Gandhiji had promised a Swaraj within one year, about a year back. But he was far from realizing it and time was running out. Lord Reading, the Viceroy, was anxious to bring about a settlement prior to Prince of Wales's visit and he had made certain proposals, among them the most important was unconditional release of all political prisoners. C.R Das thought this to be a God sent opportunity as it would be face saving for Gandhi who was still far from delivering his promised "Swaraj in a year". But it was in vain on account of the obstinacy of Gandhi himself who demanded the release of the Ali brothers as well. Reading rejected it because Ali Brothers had been arrested on account of their association with Khilafat Movement. By the time Gandhi agreed for a discussion on his position, a lot of precious time was wasted. C.R Das was livid, but he could do nothing, a major opportunity of settlement was squandered away by the imprudent stand of Gandhi, a pattern which would be oft repeated in future. Gandhiji now sent an ultimatum to the Government that he would launch a no tax campaign in Bardoli in Gujarat. Similar activities were planned in other states. Detail steps were taken to carry out the plan of non-cooperation with Government authorities in Bengal. Birendra Nath Sasmal led the no tax movement in Medinipur. Jatindramohan Sengupta led the labour strike. But after creating a lot of hype and expectation, Gandhi himself put a brake when a violent mob had set fire to a police station in Chauri Chaura, a village in U.P and killed few policemen. Gandhi called off the tax movement saying that people of India failed to live up to the ideals of Satyagraha and therefore it was not a proper time to demand Swaraj. Except for Gandhi loyalists (deemed as coterie) like Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajagopalachari etc. almost all prominent leaders like Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai vehemently condemned the Mahatma for his thoughtlessness, for putting his personal agenda before the interest of the nation. Even Jawaharlal, his later day trusted aide, rued, that Chauri Chaura was a remote village and action by a small group of excitable peasants was not reason enough to put a stop to one of the most promising movements

of India. Subhas, expressing his sense of disappointment wrote, "To sound the order of retreat just when the public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling point was nothing sort of a national calamity." Gandhi was soon arrested and put behind the bars.

Young Subhas, when released from prison set himself to work for the flood affected people of North Bengal. Under the direction of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy, Subhas organized a huge relief effort where he mobilized many volunteers. The notable among them in this effort was Leela Nag, one of the leaders of Sri Sangha and the first woman to graduate from the Dhaka University, who was to become Subhas's trusted aide in the later years. Lord Lytton praised the relief efforts. Through sheer perseverance and hard work Subhas rose into prominence within a short time and became, and became the right-hand man of Chittaranjan Das. He was entrusted with the editorship of the daily of the Swaraj Party, Banglar Katha. He organized the All Bengal Youth League with himself as the president in 1923. He became the president of the Labour Union of the Tata Iron and Steel company and also the presided over the All India Trade Union Congress. In December 1922, at the Gaya Congress, Deshbandhu and Motilal Nehru clashed with the followers (read coterie) of Gandhi over Chittaranjan's proposal for the council entry. The proposal was rejected by the staunch Gandhi followers as it did not have the blessings of Gandhi. Therefore Chittaranjan Das resigned from the presidentship of Bengal Congress and floated his own party - The Swaraj Party and decided to enter the legislative councils, which at that time was dominated by the moderates who would simply follow their British masters wishes. An entry to the council, would, according to Das, give them opportunity to fight the Government and extract important concessions for the people on important issues and would thus stay alive the possibility of swaraj. The purpose was to carry out continuous opposition to the Government on important issues, thereby paralyzing the administrative machinery, thus rendering British rule ineffective and handicapped.

When Swaraj party began its function, Subhas became its Secretary. An English daily called Forward was also started and Subhas was given its responsibility. The daily took up a major position among all the nationalist newspapers of India.

Subhas Chandra Bose and the Forward Publishing

Deshbandhu was extremely peeved that the Congress's daily, Servant, was abusing him and his party day in and day out. Servant was under a group of Congress party that was against Deshbandhu and his activities, possibly being jealous of his success. Deshbandhu felt the need of a periodical of his own that would promote the view points

of Swaraj party. This was because his ideas and ideals were never discussed in the Congress periodicals. They opposed his decision to enter the Legislative council. Subhas was initially editing *Banglar Katha*, a Bengali weekly. But it stopped when Subhas was jailed. After getting released, Subhas started *Banglar Katha* again as a daily. Deshbandhu decided to publish an English daily as well. In November 1922, Forward Publishing co. was registered with help from Manmohan Bhattacharjee, a Congress leader who was the erstwhile secretary of the Servant. Sarat Chandra Bose became the managing director. After Gaya Congress Deshbandhu faced tremendous hostility from the Congress members and politicians in Bengal. Nobody was ready to even publish his opinions. Deshbandhu and Subhas worked very hard to gather funds for starting the Forward in October 1923. When Manmohan was arrested under regulation 3 act, Subhas became the secretary of the Forward publishing. On 23rd October, 1923, the first edition of Forward came out, its editor in chief was Chittaranjan himself, assistant editors were Mrinalkanti Bose and Kishorilal Ghosh.

On the eve of the legislative assembly elections, Forward had published a damaging report regarding a rail accident in Dankuni. East India Railways brought a defamation suit against the paper and the court awarded a compensation of Rs 150,000 to be paid by Forward to Railways. Many in the Government were relieved by thinking that it was the end of Forward publications. But with a barrister like Sarat Bose at the helm, to circumvent the payment, Forward was transformed first into New Forward and then into Liberty and continued its tirades against the Government. Satya Ranjan Bakshi was the editor of Forward at that time.

Subhas Chandra Bose as a journalist

Here is an assessment of Sachin Dasgupta who had joined Forward Publications as a reporter. Sachin was also a friend and classmate of Subhas Chandra Bose. On 23rd January 1946, he writes in *Hindustan Standard*, "*Journalism is also indebted to Subhas Chandra Bose for the manifold changes he was instrumental in introducing in his paper Forward. The departure from the hackneyed and the stereotyped way of reporting was made at his suggestion in connection with the reporting of the election speeches of C.R. Das. The way and manner of presentation of things both in the local reports as well as in other news was revolutionized so to say in Forward. The beaten track of putting things as they happened in chronological order was deserted at this time and the choicest portion of the speeches and the important events of the day was given prominence in Forward first. Care was always taken to see that the whole tenor of the paper was conducive to the healthy growth of Nationalism in our people.... This is how Subhas Chandra reoriented journalism and fashioned it to make it live and attractive.*"

Sachin Dasgupta continues, "*History of Forward in its early days, is the history of Subhas Chandra Bose. It was Subhas in the making. Day and night, he worked feverishly for the paper.*" Subhas worked extremely hard to ensure proper printing in absence of good quality printing machines, when elections were drawing near and the Swarajists had to bank heavily on the Forward to carry forward their viewpoints to the public. Night after night, Subhas, Sabitriprasanna, Sachin and others spent working in the Dharmatala office of Forward, lying on the office table, eating unhygienic but cheap street food and solving the difficulties faced by the publication.

Eventually Subhas's hard work paid off and Forward got a good press with associated printing machines after buying Indian Daily News Paper and its printing press.

Later Forward had to be published as Liberty owing to a court case against it.

To further consolidate his position C.R Das took up the challenge headlong and did a whirlwind tour of South India, then considered as the bastion of Congress, in 1923. He received an overwhelming response. In the different provinces of India including that of Bengal the Congress and the Swarajists had become bitter rivals. This had caused great damage to the National cause. In 1923 under Maulana Abul Kalam Azad a special session of the Congress was held in Delhi. A compromise was worked out and Congressmen were allowed to contest elections of the councils and the position of the Swarajists was almost accepted, although Congress distanced itself as an organization from contesting elections. In the all India elections that followed, Swarajists displayed a wonderful performance, by either becoming the strongest opposition or winning the majority, esp. in that of Bengal and Central Provinces. In the local body elections of the United Provinces, the party did remarkably well under the stewardship of Motilal Nehru.

In 1923 Subhas became the secretary of Bengal Provincial Congress. He also became sensitive the needs of Hindu Muslim unity for fighting the British together through a genuine understanding of the needs of the Muslim in line with the ideals of Deshbandhu. Deshbandhu realized that the British policy of divide and rule would cost India much more and a divided house was house fallen. Therefore, Deshbandhu had tried his best to take the Muslims along in his quest for Swaraj and he accommodated them, but not gave in to their unjust demands. He knew about the fundamentalism in Islam, the inherent superiority complex that would prevent a section of their leaders to align with the Hindus for a common cause. Hindu Muslim unity was far off as the results showed right after non-cooperation movement collapsed. Violent riots, fueled by the political immaturity of Congress and the cunning policies of British, started across the country, resulting in the terrible Moplah killings in Malabar. Only somebody like Deshbandhu,

who was trusted by the leaders of both communities for fairness and justice, could take the two warring factions along. Deshbandhu was farsighted in his dealings with the Muslims. He signed the Bengal pact in 1923 which was rejected by the Congress but was ratified by the Provincial conference in May 1924, that had been instrumental in gaining the trust of the Muslims.

Subhas's reputation as a leader at such a young age could be gauged from the fact that he was invited to the fourth Congress of the Communist International in Moscow in 1922. However, the police confiscated the communication and thus prevented him from attending. In 1924 Swarajists scored a massive victory in the Calcutta Corporation election and came into control of the Corporation. several Muslims won on Swarajist ticket even though elections were held on the basis of a separate electorate. Chittaranjan Das became the mayor of Calcutta and Saheed Suhrawardi the deputy Mayor. Subhas was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer on April 24, 1924 and he was in this post till his arrest on Oct 25, 1924. Under the new administration several new initiatives were taken like giving milk to the poorest, setting up education facilities, esp. primary schools, setting up dispensaries, maintaining civic facilities, ensuring cleanliness of streets etc. Subhas himself took the lead and soon earned reputation as an able administrator. He reduced his salary from Rs 3000 to Rs 1500 saying that he did not need more than that. He used to sponsor the education of needy students with the remaining amount. All the parks and streets were named after national leaders. No respect was to be paid to the British officials but only to the Nationalist leaders. All the employees were supposed to wear Khadi garments (Khaddar). All these activities were not to the liking of the Government who was least bothered about people's welfare. The objective of the Corporation was outlined by the Mayor Chittaranjan Das, to improve the living conditions of the poor by providing them better healthcare and conditions of living. Subhas wanted to give a practical shape to this idea.

Subhas had many differences of opinion with Deshbandhu and argued with him vociferously as per his own tribute to him in a letter after Deshbandhu's death. However, one person Subhas was extremely intimate with was Deshbandhu's wife, Basanti Devi. Prabhavati Devi had said to Basanti, "I gave birth to Subhas, but you are his real mother." As per the reminiscences of Basanti Devi, Subhas would often come to the Das household late at night and his demand to his beloved mother (Basanti Devi) was to cook for him something. Even though Basanti Devi would explain that the kitchen was closed, she ultimately had to go and cook a simple "bhate bhat" (a Bengali delicacy of boiled rice and vegetables served with clarified butter or ghee) and Subhas used to take that with heavenly pleasure. Basanti Devi remembered the night when she was

arrested by the police for picketing and had returned home late at night when she was released, Subhas cried his heart out for her. Basanti Devi, it seems also had tried very hard for Subhas's marriage. After Deshbandhu's death Subhas wanted Basanti Devi to come to the forefront and become the leader and the guru. But Basanti Devi stayed away from politics, perhaps wisely.



Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, who renounced everything for the sake of the country and his worthy spouse Basanti Devi, who was the first to go to jail while volunteering for the Non-Cooperation Movement. Deshbandhu was the first leader to send his own family members to prison to set an example to the people of nobility and sacrifice

Image courtesy: Wikipedia



Basanti Devi

Basanti Devi, worthy wife of Chittaranjan Das and the mother of Subhas Chandra Bose. A great lady who courted arrest to set an example during Non-Cooperation and whose arrest triggered a massive outrage in Bengal



Gopinath Saha - The young revolutionary who wanted to kill the brutal Police Commissioner of Calcutta Charles Tegart but by mistake killed an innocent European. He was sent to the gallows. His sacrifice deeply moved Subhas
Image courtesy: Wikipedia

Subhas Chandra Bose deported to Mandalay, death of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das

Arrest and deportation of Subhas Bose

In the meanwhile, the revolutionary forces had intensified their activities. Gopinath Saha, a young revolutionary had tried to kill the notorious police commissioner of Calcutta Charles Tegart, but unfortunately had killed an innocent man named Ernest

Day. Gopinath was taken to the gallows. Congress and Swarajists appreciated the courage and the spirit of sacrifice but condemned the violent act. Police was trying their best to frame Subhas. Now they got an opportunity. On the basis of intelligence reports that Subhas had a strong relationship with the revolutionaries, that Gopinath Saha was intimate with him, they trained their guns on him, being already jealous and weary of his success as a popular young leader and able administrator.

Subhas Chandra Bose was arrested on 24th Oct, 1924 along Swarajist leaders Anil Baran Roy and S. C Mitra, and was put behind the bars in Alipore Central Jail, under Regulation Three, the notorious act. Deshbandhu was away in Shimla. The entire country went up in arms against the arrest. Deshbandhu himself was livid. "Subhas is no more a revolutionary than I am, why haven't they arrested me? If love of one's country is a crime, then I am a criminal." He thundered. The English dailies like Statesman and Englishman started baseless allegations of Subhas being the brain behind the revolutionary activities thus justifying Subhas's arrest. His solicitors dragged them to the court and the allegations were dismissed. Condemning the arrest Gandhiji wrote an article in Young India. A massive rally was held in Calcutta on 31st October. Subhas started discharging his duties from the jail. But soon, because of the problems created by British police officers, he was sent to the Baharampur Jail. In 1925 he was sent to Mandalay prison in Burma under the supervision of Assistant Inspector General of Police Lowman.

In Mandalay prison Subhas had Biplobi Trailokya Chakrabarty, famously called Maharaj, as company. Trailokya Maharaj was a unique person. He was in British prison for thirty years. Mandalay was no mean prison; it was a slaughterhouse. Tilak was lodged there for six years which hastened his death. Lala Lajpat Rai was imprisoned there for a year. Subhas was at his cheerful best despite the abysmal conditions. In a cheeky letter to his Mejda, Sarat Bose he had described the painful conditions under which he and his fellow inmates were forced to live. The British officials were in good terms with him. In October 1925 Subhas and other Hindu inmates decided to perform the Durga Puja. Major Findlay, the Dy. Commissioner was approached and he agreed to the idea but the British Government refused to give permission. As a mark of protest Subhas and other inmates started a hunger strike. Finally, the Government agreed to grant permission and also sanctioned a meager amount for the ritual. While in the prison Subhas learnt of the sudden demise of Deshbandhu.

Fall of a Star in high heaven - Death of Chittaranjan Das and the resulting political turmoil

Deshbandhu was not keeping well for a long time and yet he was working very hard. He was trying his very best for a negotiated agreement with the British, esp. for the release of Subhas and other political prisoners. Undaunted by the arrest of his trusted lieutenants, Deshbandhu went ahead with his Swarajist programme. In the early part of 1925 a compromise between him and Gandhi, called Gandhi Das pact, was put in place. The Swarajists were in charge of the political programmes. In Kanpur session of Congress in 1925 which was presided over by Sarojini Naidu, the decision was that Congress should take up the task of running the elections. Thus, the position of Chittaranjan Das was vindicated. He met Lord Lytton in Belur Math for a settlement but nothing came out of that meeting. He was taken to Darjeeling for a change, but there he fell ill and passed away. This caused a great vacuum in Bengal and National politics, and could not have come at a more opportune moment for the British. With Deshbandhu gone and Subhas away in Mandalay, the Swarajist party crumbled and the Hindu Muslim unity became a thing of the past. Rivalries started among the Bengal leaders as to each leader ego and self-assertion became more important than the national cause. J. M Sengupta, among the Gandhi Vadis tried to take an upper hand over the Swarajists. Subhas remembered the great kindness of Deshbandhu that had transformed even a petty bandit like Mathur, his large heartedness and his self-sacrifice for the nation, and wrote a touching letter to his "Ma", Basanti Devi, the wife of Deshbandhu. Subhas deeply thought about the various problems of India and started to think about his future course of actions. With his mentor and guide gone, Subhas was now all alone in Bengal politics. He knew he had to begin in a new way but he had a dogged determination and confidence in himself. But his Mandalay jail term was to continue for the next 2.5 years and his health started degenerating causing great concern to his family members.

In his book Indian Struggles Subhas analyzes the rise of Swaraj party during this period and his impressions about Gandhi and Congress. He said that "mass of India had always been susceptible to the influence of avatars, priests and gurus. The spiritual man had always wielded the largest influence in India and he is called a Saint, a Mahatma or a sadhu. For various reasons Gandhiji came to be looked upon by the people of India as a Mahatma before he became the undisputed political leader of India." Subhas said that Gandhiji's austere lifestyle, his spirit of renunciation, were all his assets and thus the masses came to acknowledge him as their leader. "Consciously or unconsciously Mahatma fully exploited the mass psychology of people. He was

exploiting many of the weak traits in the character of his countrymen which had accounted for India's downfall to a large extent." These included a "belief in the supernatural, indifference to modern scientific development, her backwardness in the science of modern warfare, the peaceful contentment engendered by her latter day philosophy and adherence to ahimsa or non-violence carried to the most absurd length." Congressmen began to look upon Gandhi not merely as a political guru but also a religious messiah and developed a cult around him that ate vegetarian, adopted the same style of dress and behavior and talked of spiritual swaraj before political swaraj. "And worst of all was the tendency on the part of the orthodox followers of the Mahatma to regard everything that he said as gospel truth without reasoning or arguing and to accept his paper Young India as their Bible." As long as Deshbandhu was there he was able to carry conviction and appeared as a genuine alternative to the Mahatma. "It was the unique personality of Deshbandhu Das that was able to combine into one party such dissimilar elements, to wrest the Congress machinery from the hands of the orthodox 'No-Changers' and to carry on a fight against the bureaucracy on many fronts. But in his absence, there was no one competent enough to continue his many-sided activities or to keep together the diverse elements that composed the Swaraj Party. The result was that the Swaraj Party remained in power only so long as the Mahatma did not emerge from his voluntary retirement. When he did emerge in 1929, the Swarajist leader, Pandit Motilal Nehru, surrendered without even the show of a fight." Indeed, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das had united the different traits of people, for instance the Maharashtrian wing of the Swarajists like Jayakar and N.C Kelkar who only believed in the theory of responsive cooperation as promoted by Lokmanya Tilak, in his Swarajist party, along with Pandit Motilal Nehru who believed in consistent opposition and did not see eye to eye with the Maharashtrian counterparts. Consequently, after Deshbandhu passed away, major rift developed under the presidentship of Motilal Nehru who lacked the all-encompassing love that Deshbandhu possessed, that had been the binding factor.

Before long, Chittaranjan's death created a void that could not be filled by any other leaders of the Swarajist party. The party melted away and was finally amalgamated in Congress.

"In this mortal world, everything perishes and will perish - but ideas, ideals and dreams do not"

Rise of a National Leader

Glimpses of the freedom movement: Subhas's release from Mandalay, council entry by defeating J.N Bose, Gandhi's return and discomfort with Subhas in Calcutta Congress and Subhas's drifting away from Gandhi by opposing of Nehru resolution, Subhas and Jawaharlal Nehru coming together, Gandhi nominating Jawaharlal as president of the Lahore congress, Subhas as Mayor of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, Simon commission and anti-Simon movement across the country, death of Lala Lajpat Rai by lathi charge of Lahore Police, Lahore conspiracy case and Bhagat Singh's killing of Saunders, Jatin Das's heroic death and Gandhi's silence, Gandhi's Civil disobedience, Gandhi Irwin pact, Bhagat Singh's martyrdom, brutal assault of Calcutta police on Subhas on the streets of Calcutta and inside jail, Bengal Volunteer's revenge - Binoy Bose kills I.G Lowman in Dhaka, Binoy Badal and Dinesh courts martyrdom in the famous Corridor battle in Writer's Building after killing I.G prison Simpson, Chattogram Armoury Raid and martyrdom of Master da Surjyo Sen and his associates, rise of woman revolutionaries - Shanti, Suniti, Bina, Preetilata, Ujjwala, Kalpana, failure of Civil Disobedience, Subhas sent to prison.

Release from Jail - An Entry into Bengal Legislative Council

About the Mandalay jail Subhas wrote in Indian Struggles, "Within these structures we were at the mercy of the elements. There was nothing to protect us from the biting cold of winter or the intense heat of summer or the tropical rains in Mandalay. We all began to wonder how we were going to live our life there. But there was no help and we had to make the best of a bad situation". Subhas read vigorously on history, literature, spiritual books, esp. on Tantra and on a host of other topics as permitted by censor. He reinforced his belief that one must sacrifice everything for the realization of one's ideals. He believed that suffering and pain would serve as incentives to greater deeds and nobler achievements. He learnt the Burmese language and developed a strong liking for the Burmese people. On the whole the relationship with prison officials was cordial. However, as a result of the unfavourable climate and the hunger strike, Subhas's health deteriorated. During the winter of 1926 he fell severely ill with Broncho Pneumonia and became bed ridden from April 1927. He also had suffered a severe weight loss. Government was initially casual about his health but given the alarming situation it reluctantly transferred Subhas to Rangoon where he was treated by a medical board composed of Lt. Col. Kelsal and his own brother Dr. Sunil Bose. While still detained in Rangoon Jail he had a severe disagreement with the

superintendent Major Flowerdew. He was then transferred to another jail where he luckily had Major Findlay. Major Findlay took pity on him and sent a strong note to the Government. A recalcitrant Government finally agreed and laid down condition to the Bengal Provincial Congress that Subhas would be released only if he agreed to go to Switzerland for treatment at his own cost. Subhas rejected this offer, finding it too insulting. He wrote a letter to his brother Sarat Bose saying that it is better to die in the jail than to be away from the motherland for a long time. He wrote, "ideas will work out their own destiny and we, who are but clods of clay encasing sparks of divine fire, have only to consecrate ourselves to the ideas." Refusing to compromise he said to the Government, "I am not a shopkeeper, I do not bargain."

In May 1927, Subhas was removed from Insein jail and was onboard a boat which took him to Calcutta. I.G Lowman had been waiting for him and he was taken to a medical board comprising of the doctors like Nilratan Sarkar, Dr. B.C Roy, Lt. Col. Sands and Major Hingston. The Governor had released him on 11 May 1927, but the policemen had actively tried to prevent his release and delayed it as far as possible. Subhas was released on 16 May, 1927. Subhas had said that fortunately for him, the new Governor Stanley Jackson had come with an open mind and with an unerring instinct of a trained politician he had sensed the grievance of the people. Under Lytton's regime, Calcutta Police had been the defacto Governor. Stanley Jackson had changed this and tried to assert his own authority. It may be noted that Bina Das, who had tried to kill Bengal Governor Stanley Jackson in the Convocation Hall of Calcutta University in 1932 was the daughter of Subhas's master mohashoy of Ravenshaw School, Beni Madhab Das.

While Subhas was in Mandalay prison, he was elected to the Bengal legislative council by a huge majority by defeating a formidable opponent, the liberal Mr. J. N Basu, nephew of Bhupendra Nath Basu, ex Congress President.

Subhas was in Mandalay jail when fresh elections were declared for the Bengal Legislative council in November 1926. Bengal Congress had selected Subhas Chandra Bose to fight against Mr. J.N Basu, the leader of the Liberal Party, who had won even during the days when Swaraj party had swept through the Council seats in 1923. Sarat Bose and Bibhavati Bose campaigned extensively for Subhas. The election organization in the constituency was in charge of Durga Charan Bannerjee, solicitor. Basanti Devi had issued an emotional appeal to the people of the constituency through the mouthpiece of the Swarajists, the Forward, to vote for Subhas, her husband's right-hand man whose patriotism, enthusiasm and sacrifice were unparalleled. Subhas won

a thumping majority by securing 2110 votes as against only 588 polled by his rival (adopted from My Uncle Netaji, by Dr. Asoke Nath Bose).

By the time he was released he had lost his health and it took him a long time to recover. But this obstinate and desperate son of the motherland was not to be cowed down. He renewed his activities with greater vigour. He started movements for the interests of the farmers, the labourers, and the students. Gandhiji had been forced to retire from the active politics by the rise of the Swarajists under Deshbandhu. Now with Deshbandhu gone and Subhas still finding his ground, Gandhiji again became the undisputed leader of Indian National Movement. Also, people began to shake themselves out of the stupour that had befallen the nation and the contribution of the youth was most vital. Gandhi was still retired from active politics and Motilal Nehru had traveled to Europe. Responsibility of the Swarajists rested on Mr. Narayana Iyengar who did a great job of restoring intercommunal friendship after a tour of India. He organized a unity conference in November in Calcutta. Bengal, which had been plagued by a series of communal violence in 1926, began to return to the fold of normalcy. In August the ministers were thrown out from Bengal Legislative Council because of a no confident motion moved by them. A strike was organized in the biggest railway workshop of the Bengal Nagpur Railway, in Kharagpur. The company acceded to the demand of the workers. Later in November the meeting of the Bengal Congress committee was held with Subhas as the President and Kiran Sankar Roy as the secretary. The Congress workers were rejuvenated and the Government had given the final impetus to the rising tide of Nationalism.



Biplobi Trailokya Maharaj - Subhas's jail mate in Mandalay, a revolutionary who was in prison for 30 years and fought for independence of Bangladesh. Image courtesy Jayasree Publishing Facebook discussion page



The infamous Mandalay prison that housed Subhas for more than two years from 1925 to 1927. He was transferred briefly to Insein prison. In Mandalay Subhas conducted a strike to get the right to perform Durga Puja and won the concession from British Government. Image courtesy; Wikimapia

Simon Commission, Calcutta Congress and Subhas's rift with Gandhiji, demise of Swaraj party

Simon Commission and the Declaration of Purna Swaraj

In Nov 1927, the Viceroy Lord Irwin made an announcement regarding the appointment of the Indian Statutory commission under section 84a of the Government of India Act which called for a once in a decade review of the political situation in India. The Congress had been pressing for a Round Table conference since 1920 for revising the Constitution for the early introduction of the Dominion Home Rule. But the Conservatives in the power in England, who had no sympathy for the demand, had decided to settle the question of India before 1929 elections. The commission had its chairman John Simon. It was to be a parliamentary commission composed of all the political parties of England but Indians were excluded from it. In Indian Struggles of Subhas Bose it is noted that, "the Commission was charged with inquiring into the working of the system of government, the growth of education and the development of representative institutions in British India and matters connected therewith and to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of responsible government or to extend, modify or restrict the degree of responsible government then existing therein, including the question whether the establishment of second chambers of the local legislatures is or is not desirable." This announcement was received with a chorus of condemnation across India as Indians were getting accustomed to the idea of self-rule and that their political destiny would be decided by the British parliamentary committee without any input from Indians was deemed as a major insult. Even the Indian liberals boycotted the commission. In the words of the Indian Struggle, "The attitude of the Liberals was explained by a resolution passed at a public meeting held at Allahabad in December,

which was presided over by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and which considered 'the exclusion of Indians a deliberate insult to the people of India, as not only does it definitely assign to them a position of inferiority, but what is worse, it denies them the right to participate in the determination of the constitution of their own country'. "

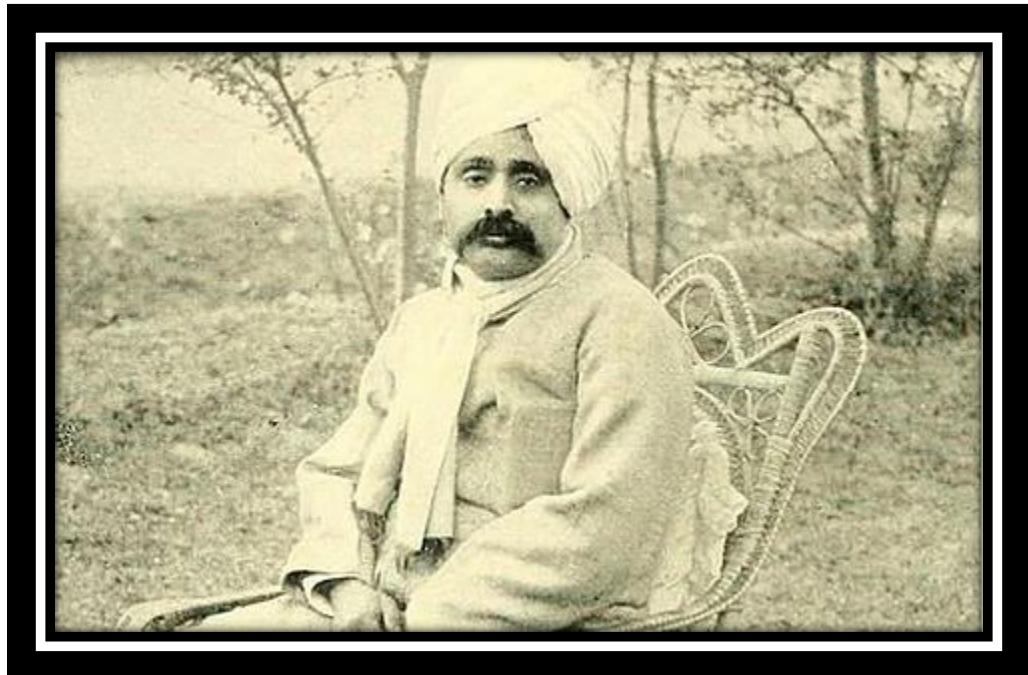
Madras Congress in December 1927 decided to boycott Simon Commission at every stage and in every form. Influenced by the younger section of the congress led by Subhas, Madras congress passed the resolution of complete independence as the goal of Indian people. Gandhi as usual dithered and said that "it has been hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed." The Madras Congress was presided over by M.A. Ansari. The Madras Congress also took a resolution of drawing up a plan for an All India All party's conference for drafting the constitution of India. Subhas in the meanwhile had become the youth leader just like Jawaharlal Nehru, the son of Motilal Nehru, the Cambridge educated intellectual who was nine years elder to Subhas. He became the President of the Bengal Congress and also the joint general secretary of the All India Congress along with Jawaharlal and Qureshi. In 1928 a committee was formed under Motilal Nehru to draft a report on the principles of the new constitution that would meet the country's needs and Subhas was a member of the committee. However the constitution aimed for Dominion Status and not Purna Swaraj. Not satisfied with this constitution, along with Jawaharlal, Subhas established the Indian Independence League, with a goal of complete independence. The All India Muslim League meanwhile in the spirit of the Unity conference had adopted a resolution recommending Hindu Muslim unity, boycott of the Simon Commission and joint electorate with reservation of seats for the Muslims. Jinnah and Ali brothers joined the meeting. This gave a tremendous impetus to the Nationalist Muslims aligned to Congress. The voices of the labour unions were also growing stronger and inspired by the Russian Revolution Indian socialists and communists had gained ground steadily. The All India Trade Union Congress met at Kanpur. The Left wing in the Congress got a shot in the arms with the ascent of Jawaharlal and Subhas, both being sympathetic to the Left ideology. Jawaharlal had declared himself to be a socialist and Subhas had been aligned with the socialists within Congress.

The Nationalist movement was backed up by the trade union movements and growing resentment among the working classes. There were strikes called by the textile workers in Bombay, Jute mill workers in Calcutta, and the workers in Tata Iron and Steel. In the latter Subhas played a major role. In February 1928, John Simon wrote to the Viceroy suggesting some changes to make the commission more inclusive of the Indian concerns - a "joint free conference" with a body of representations chosen by the Indian

Legislatures. But this was rejected by all parties. In the Indian Legislative council Lala Lajpat Rai moved a resolution rejecting the Simon Commission. Assembly therefore could not appoint any committee to work with Simon commission. Except for the Central Provinces Legislative council, all the other provincial legislative councils however appointed committees to cooperate with the commission, in spite of the opposition of the Congress and the Liberals. Simon arrived in February 1928 and was greeted with hartals and black flags across India. Only in Bengal, Congress had launched a campaign for the boycott of the British goods. But in the rest of India, Congress could not cope with public expectation and Mahatma Gandhi did not come out of his voluntary retirement to lead the movement. Subhas observed in the Indian Struggle, "When the writer (Subhas) visited the Mahatma in May 1928, at his Ashram, at Sabarmati, he reported to him the public enthusiasm which he had met with in many provinces and begged him to come out of his retirement and give a lead to the country. At that time the reply of the Mahatma was that he did not see any light, though before his very eyes the peasantry of Bardoli were demonstrating through a no-tax campaign that they were ready for a struggle. During the whole of 1928 and 1929, there was so much unrest in the labour world that if a political campaign had been started at that time, it would have been well-timed. Moreover, in 1928 and 1929, there was more enthusiasm and excitement in provinces like Punjab and Bengal than in 1930. In 1930, when the movement was launched by the Mahatma, the labour unrest had subsided to a large extent and the situation in some provinces was much quieter than before. After starting the movement in 1930, the Mahatma observed in his paper, Young India, that he could have launched the campaign two years earlier. The responsibility for not utilizing the situation in 1928 devolves not only on the Mahatma but also on the Swarajist leaders who had the Congress machinery in their hands at the time, but who had unfortunately lost their dynamic impulse. If a leader like Deshbandhu Das had been available then, the events following the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit to India in 1921 would have been repeated in 1928." A leader of the stature of Deshbandhu was clearly missed in the current situation who could have organized a much larger movement and put a much bigger pressure on the Government.

Undeterred by the opposition the seven members of the Simon commission traveled from place to place and met with hostile demonstrations, black flags and shouts of "Simon Go Back." Government resorted to counter demonstrations using a section of the Muslims and the depressed classes. Government also resorted to unnecessarily harsh measures. In Lahore the black flag procession was led by Lala Lajpat Rai. Police struck with lathis and baton and Lala Lajpat Rai who was at the front was grievously injured. This indirectly resulted to his untimely death and Simon Commission became

even more unpopular. The recommendations of the Motilal Nehru committee on the constitution rendered recommendations of Simon commission as superfluous. The committee presented its findings before the plenary session of the All-Parties Conference in Lucknow in August and the report was unanimously adopted.



Lala Lajpat Rai - the undisputed lion of Punjab, freedom fighter of three decades, died as a result of injury from Lathi charge while demonstrating against Simon Commission



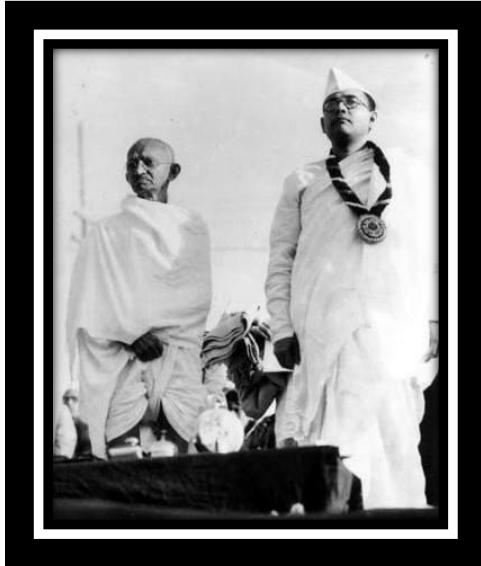
All over India demonstrations against Simon Commission became spontaneous. Even Liberals under Tej Bahadur Sapru joined hand with Congress. "Simon Go Back" was the call from every corner of India

Calcutta Congress 1928 - Gandhi takes the reign of Congress

The movement catapulted Subhas to the mainstream of the Indian politics. Until 1925 he was the right hand of Deshbandhu. But from 1927 onwards he became an all India leader, esp. of the youth, who could present his viewpoints and plan through the conferences and the meetings of the Congress. He was alone, but he was gaining strength and people across India came to love and respect him as a National leader. In May 1928 Subhas presided over the Maharashtra Provincial Conference at Poona. In his speech he advocated some lines of activities for the Congress which he had contemplated during his incarceration in Burma, that included organization of labours, students and separate organization for women.

The first All Bengal Conference of students was held in August in Calcutta and was presided over by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. After the Conference, students' organizations were started all over Bengal and somewhat later, similar organizations were started in other provinces as well. The position was further cemented in the Calcutta Congress of 1928. The Calcutta Congress in December 1928, according to Nanda Mukherjee, biographer, was a landmark in Subhas's life. He was elected to be the president of the All India Youth Congress in Calcutta. He was the General Officer Commanding (GoC) of the Congress Volunteers. The session was presided over by Motilal Nehru. The attendance in the Calcutta session was the largest and all arrangements were made at a big scale. Subhas was in the lead and he was assisted by several important revolutionary groups, including the Mukti Sangha or the Bengal Volunteers of Hemchandra Ghosh, Sri Sangha of Anil Roy and Leela Nag, Masterda Surjyo Sen and his team, Anushilon Samity, Jugantar and other revolutionary groups from across Bengal. They had joined hands to use Congress as a platform to further the revolutionary activities and they had explicit trust in Subhas Chandra Bose. Major Satya Gupta helped in bringing the needed military discipline and even women were participants as volunteers under Latika Bose. This event was a taste of things to come in the form of I.N.A. A mounted battalion was prepared to escort the President. The conference was held in Park Circus Maidan, which was renamed as Deshbandhu Nagar. The volunteers were trained in battle like discipline and rules and regulations like checking the identify of every participant without distinction. It seemed to everybody that a huge army was marching past across Calcutta, an army entirely of Indians, under the leadership of an Indian. Everybody was amazed by the efficiency and dedication with which this event was organized. Gandhiji had initially refused to come to Calcutta Congress but Motilal Nehru had persuaded him to join to support his report.

In the Congress there were two groups - the older one contented with the Dominion Status and who would accept the Nehru report and the leftist group that would not settle without a full independence and wanted to accept Nehru report only on the basis of complete independence. A compromise was worked out in Delhi between the two groups but in Calcutta session Gandhiji refused to accept the Delhi settlement. Therefore, the main resolution of Congress moved by Gandhi on Dominion Status was opposed by the entire left wing who supported the amendment moved by Subhas. A voting was held on the resolution and its amendment but the followers of Mahatma almost blackmailed people in voting for the resolution stating that if the resolution was defeated Gandhi would retire from politics. The amendment was defeated, but not without a good fight despite the blackmail. There were more reasons for the rift. Subhas had organized his volunteer corps well, in a military style. They were dressed in uniform and paraded as a well-disciplined unit. However, Congress old timers did not like the aggressive display and Gandhiji had equated it to a circus. Subhas summed up succinctly in his Indian Struggle, "The Calcutta Congress, coming after the Madras Congress, was in the nature of an anticlimax. The President-elect on the day of his arrival was given an ovation which would excite the envy of kings and dictators, but when he left, there was disappointment writ large on every face. There was tremendous enthusiasm all over the country at the time and every one had expected the Congress to act boldly. But while the country was ready, the leaders were not. The Mahatma, unfortunately for his countrymen, did not see light. Hence the temporizing resolution of the Calcutta Congress which only served to kill precious time. Only madness or folly could have led one to hope that the mighty British Government would concede even Dominion Home Rule without a struggle. During the sittings of the Congress a procession of 10,000 workers visited the Congress pandal to demonstrate their solidarity with the struggle for national freedom and to appeal to the Congress to take up the cause of the starving workers. But all these signs of upheaval made no impression on the leaders." Subhas raised some pertinent questions - In the Dominion Status resolution Gandhi had given twelve months' time to the British Government. However, they could not guarantee that there was a reasonable chance of getting the Dominion Status within that period. Why should not they then take up a bold stand? Nobody had an answer, least of all Gandhi, whose pet hobby again took precedence over national considerations.



Gandhiji and Subhas Chandra Bose, the two principal leaders of Indian Independence Movement, who were poles apart in their ideology and means. They came momentarily closer in 1938, only to drift apart and never to meet again. Yet, Subhas addressed Gandhi as the Father of the Nation

Purna Swaraj, Civil Disobedience Movement and Round Table Conference, Revolutionaries strike

Plan to start round Table Conference, Youth Unrest

In the month of December Lahore Congress was about to begin. But Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, after consulting the Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald, declared his intention to start a Round Table conference in London on the publication of the report of the Simon Commission. He said that it was implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, was the attainment of dominion status. Congress lost no time to gather in Delhi and sent a joint manifesto accepting Viceroy's offer signed by Gandhi, Nehru duo, Pandit Madan Mohan Malavia, Dr. Ansari, Sardar Patel, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu among others. Dr. Kitchlew, Abdul Bari and Subhas Bose issued a separate manifesto opposing the acceptance of Dominion Status and the idea of participating in the Round Table conference. Bose rightly pointed out that the Viceroy had laid a trap, as Lloyd George did for Sinn Fein.

In the meanwhile, an attempt was made on the life of Lord Irwin when he escaped unhurt from a train bombing. In Lahore Congress a resolution was moved by Gandhi congratulating the Viceroy over his providential escape and this caused much resentment. Though a resolution on complete independence was passed in Lahore Congress, there was no vision or formula of achieving the same. A proposal of Subhas to form a parallel Government in the country organizing the workers, peasants and youths, was defeated. Subhas wanted an immediate launch of the campaign to recover the lost grounds, but Gandhi was in no mood to relent. He came out with a list of fifteen names as members of the working committee and Srinivasa Iyengar, Subhas and other leftists were excluded. Gandhi had two potent weapons in his arsenal, his typical blackmailing tactics of retirement and his call for fast unto death. Both worked wonderfully with his coterie who never raised their voices against his decisions. Gandhiji openly declared that he wanted a committee of one mind, that of his. No dissent, no differing opinions were encouraged. For the country this proved to be catastrophic in the long run as he became the sole representative in the Round Table Conference in 1931.



Jatin Das – a Major in the Bengal Volunteers, a trusted lieutenant of Subhas Bose and a soldier of Indian Independence who was charged in Lahore Conspiracy Case along with Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutta. In protest against the inhuman treatment meted out in jail, Jatin fasted till his death. Image courtesy: Creative Commons

Gandhiji could not however decimate Subhas. He became the undisputed leader of the youth. He was the President of the All India Trade Union Congress and remained in that post until 1931. In Bengal the Jatindramohan Sengupta's group had in the meanwhile become an anti Subhas lobby. Sengupta became the leader of Swarajists and a Mayor of Calcutta corporation. He created a parallel Provincial Congress Committee and started fighting against Subhas. However, he was defeated in all the elections. This was

a dark chapter in the history of Bengal Congress as it showed the ugly side of partisan politics and selfish power hungriness by a section which overshadowed even National considerations. Subhas began to address the youth organizations all over the country, like the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, and he became quite popular as a trade union leader, among the working classes.

Bengal Congress - a divided house

Post 1928 a factionalism was engineered in Bengal Congress. The rift between Gandhi and Subhas widened further when Subhas along with Dr. Kitchlew and Maulana Abdul Bari, refused to lend signature to the Dominion Status proposal of Lord Irwin and the idea of participating in the Round Table Conference. Jatindra Mohan Sengupta, one-time Swarajist, was won over by Mahatma, and he had a good following in Bengal who stood firmly against Subhas Bose. In the annual general meeting of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee in 1931, Subhas faction won by a whisker. Bengal Provincial Student's Association was formed that was aligned with Subhas Bose. The Jugantar group of revolutionaries, the Sri Sangha, the Bengal Volunteers of Hemchandra Ghosh lent their support to Subhas. A faction of Anushilon Samity members however went against Subhas. Most of the Swarajists like Kiran Shankar Roy, T.C Goswami, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, and Sarat Bose stood firmly with Subhas. Surendra Mohan Ghosh, Purna Chandra Das, Manoranjan Gupta, Satyaranjan Bakshi, Major Satya Gupta, Ambika Chakrabarty and Surjyo Sen (Master da), Leela Nag, and Anil Roy were Subhas loyalists. Trailokya Chakrabarty Maharaj, Gnan Majumdar, Hemanta Basu, became ardent supporters of J.M Sengupta. Hemanta Basu also disrupted all meetings addressed by Subhas in 1929 (Netaji my Uncle - Dr. Asokenath Bose). Later however Hemanta Basu became a staunch supporter of Subhas and joined Forward Bloc.

The nation had not stopped even if its leader Gandhi had paused the momentum. Youth unrest and impatience was manifested through the revolutionary activities throughout the length and breadth of the country. An Inspector of Police, Saunders, was assassinated in Lahore as the revolutionaries believed that he was responsible for the attack on Lala Lajpat Rai. On April 1929, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Datta, threw a bomb in the Assembly at Delhi. Large numbers of young revolutionaries were arrested which included Bhagat Singh, Batukeshwar Dutta, and Jatin Das of Calcutta who was a Major in the volunteer corps of Subhas and had helped in training the youth volunteers for the 1928 Calcutta Congress. The prisoners were held under Lahore conspiracy case. While still under trial, they went on hunger strike demanding better conditions in

jail. Subhas writes in Indian Struggles, "Sardar Bhagat Singh was known to be the leader of the youth movement (called the Naujawan Bharat Sabha) in the Punjab, and the fearless and defiant attitude adopted by him and his comrades, after their arrest and during their trial, made a deep impression on the public. Moreover, Sardar Bhagat Singh came from a well-known patriotic family — being a nephew of Sardar Ajit Singh, who had been deported to Burma in 1909 along with Lala Lajpat Rai." Jatindra Nath Das at first was reluctant to join the hunger strike because he considered it as a dangerous game. But then once he joined, he never turned back from it. The Government made a half-hearted attempt to compromise by promising better medical treatment of the fasting prisoners. But the prisoners were adamant to extract the same concessions for all prisoners and this the Government did not accede to. The movement received wide recognition and in Calcutta Subhas Bose and other Congress leaders were arrested while supporting the movement. Jatin fasted for 61 days and then he died on 13 Sep 1929. The pages of Young India of Gandhi, ordinarily filled with all sorts of observations on all political events and also on the topics of health, diet etc. had nothing to say about the incident of Jatin Das. Subhas writes in Indian Struggle, "A follower of the Mahatma who was also a close friend of the deceased, wrote to him inquiring as to why he had said nothing about the event. The Mahatma replied to the effect that he had purposely refrained from commenting, because if he had done so, he would have been forced to write something unfavourable." And yet, Gandhiji, had taken up fasting as a tool for waging war not only against the British, but also against anything and anyone he did not like and could not cope with. But his countrymen did their bits. As the dead body of Jatin was moved from Lahore to Calcutta, thousands and thousands of people assembled in every station to pay homage. In Indian Struggle Subhas mentions, "Among the many messages that were received on the occasion was one which touched the heart of every Indian. It was a message from the family of Terence McSweeney, the Lord Mayor of Cork, who had died a martyr under similar conditions in Ireland. The message ran thus: 'Family of Terence McSweeney have heard with grief and pride of the death of Jatin Das. Freedom will come.'" Jatin was only 25 years when he died. Youth were charged up like never before. Everywhere youth organizations sprang up. Subhas himself presided over Punjab students' conference in Lahore, Central Provinces Youth Conference in Nagpur and Berar students conference in Amravati. In 1929 the Government made another attempt to tame Subhas. His paper Forward was fined to the tune of Rs 150,000 for writing defamatory article about Indian Railways. It was expected that the paper would close down. But the daily paper Liberty was born in its place and Subhas continued his tirades against the Government policies.



Dinesh Gupta, Binoy Bose, Badal Gupta - the three intrepid Bengal Volunteer revolutionaries who killed I.G Prison Simpson for taking revenge against atrocities on Subhas in prison. The trio fought the corridor battle in Writer's and embraced martyrdom. Photo courtesy: Facebook discussion page of Jayasree publications



Gandhi and Bose - train travel with Gandhi to discuss on Purna Swaraj

Civil Disobedience Launched

Subhas meanwhile was also reaching out to the revolutionaries across Bengal. He surreptitiously met Masterda Suryo Sen and his team in Chattogram, in the room of a bank. He gave moral support to them for any plan of action. Soon that was executed. But before that lets rewind. In January 1930 Mahatma decided to act. January 26 was planned to be observed as an Independence Day. Mahatma had stated: 'Civil Disobedience alone can save the country from impending lawlessness and secret crime, since there is a party of violence in the country which will not listen to speeches,

resolutions, or conferences, but believes only in direct action.' He prepared the nation for a Civil Disobedience. "We will therefore prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes," he said. On 23rd January 1930 Subhas was arrested and taken to prison. He was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. On January 30, Mahatma issued a statement in Young India that he would be satisfied with the "Substance of Independence" and he mentioned eleven points to further clarify his position that included among others Prohibition, abolition of salt tax, reduction of land revenue, reduction of military expenditure, reduction of salary of high graded services, protective tariff on foreign clothes, discharge of all political prisoners (except revolutionaries charged with murder) etc. He termed it as Purna Swaraj. By February the Congress Working Committee had given Mahatma almost dictatorial power to carry out his plans. A large section of the Muslims including the Ali brothers were opposed to the plan of Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience.

On February 27 Mahatma announced his plan of campaign that would be the hallmark of his political life. To assuage any fear of the repetition of the 1922 Gandhiji said, "civil disobedience once begun this time cannot be stopped and must not be stopped so long there is a single civil resister left free or alive." Gandhiji announced his intention of defying the salt law along with his ashram members. He planned to commence a march to the sea coast in Dandi from his ashrama on March 12. This was a master stroke as tax on salt, a necessary ingredient of the food of common man, which they can obtain freely from the sea water as was the custom from time immemorial, was an issue very close to the heart of all Indians. Gandhiji issued a letter to the Viceroy explaining his position and rationale. Subhas writes in Indian Struggle, "the march to Dandi was an event of historical importance which will rank on the same level with Napoleon's march to Paris on his return from Elba or Mussolini's march to Rome when he wanted to seize political power." His march all the way to Dandi roused the villagers like never before. On April 6, Mahatma started the Civil Disobedience. Everywhere boycott of foreign goods was started. Congress volunteers enforced boycott by picketing across India. As a result of Gandhiji's appeal women came out in large numbers to participate. Government resorted to severe suppression, confiscating property of the volunteers and declaring their activities unlawful. All the papers came under Government control and brutal measures of repression were undertaken. More than 60,000 people were put in prison. Police also resorted to killing of unarmed satyagrahis and in Peshawar alone in one day several hundreds were killed. The sentiments of people were roused by such brutal repressions and a battalion of Garhwal soldiers were court martialed and were sent to long term imprisonment when they refused to open fire on their fellow

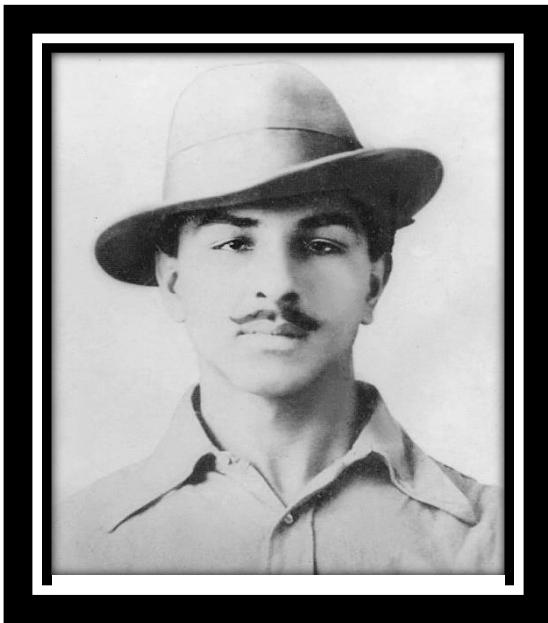
countrymen. In Frontier province Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan developed red shirt volunteers called Khudai Khidmadgars who defied Government orders and carried out civil disobedience throughout the province. In the meanwhile, Subhas had become the Mayor of Calcutta and also the treasurer of the All India Trade Union Congress. Gandhiji was also arrested on 5 May and was placed in Yeravda prison in Pune.



Masterda Surjo Sen



Master da Surjo Sen and Chattogram Armoury Raid - One of the most daring assaults on the British raj by a group of young revolutionaries who made Chattogram independent for three long days and engaged in an armed combat with the British army. Surjo Sen was betrayed and was sent to the gallows. His associate Preetilata launched an attack on European club and Ramakrishna Biswas killed an inspector Tarini Mukherjee while trying to kill I.G Craig



Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged in Lahore conspiracy case. Failure to protect them as part of Gandhi Irwin pact and the surreptitious manner in which they were hanged led to much protest against Gandhi, esp. by youth.

Civil Disobedience ends by Gandhi Irwin Pact and Round Table Conference, Subhas sent to jail

Assault on Subhas, the Gandhi Irwin Pact and its impact

The British Government took notice of the growing unrest and impatience in all the provinces and decided to release Gandhi and other leaders of the Congress on 25 January 1931. But Subhas was rearrested on 26 January 1931, after being seriously injured owing to a lathi charge while leading a procession as the Mayor of Calcutta, defying a ban. The British mounted police lathi charged a peaceful procession led by him, the Mayor. Subhas, Mr. Chattopadhyay, the education officer and Mr. Ghoshal, the Dy. License officer of Calcutta Municipal Corporation were all seriously injured. Let us recount in his own language what happened on that day - "On this occasion the writer had to spend 24 hours in the Lalbazar Central Police Station without food and drink and without change. There was only a small quantity of Tincture of Iodine available at the station for application to his injuries. This was soon exhausted and when he asked for more, he did not get any. The next day he had to appear in Court with his clothes covered with blood and his arm in a sling. He made a statement before the Magistrate regarding his treatment in the Police Station which was duly recorded. After his removal to prison he was X-rayed and it was then found that two of the fingers in his right hand had been fractured."

He was again sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment by the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta. On 8 March he was released on account of general amnesty. Another incident had shaken the conscience of Bengal. In a detention camp in Hijli, where protesters and Satyagrahis were lodged, on 16 September 1931 police shot dead two unarmed detainees Santosh Kumar Mitra and Tarakeshwar Sengupta. Subhas Chandra Bose came down to claim their bodies, led the movement against this monstrous atrocity and shared dais with his arch rival J.M Sengupta to protest against the firing. Widespread condemnation took place in Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore condemned the incident in the strongest term in a meeting convened on 26 September 1931 at the foot of the Monument in Calcutta. Subhas resigned from the presidentship of Bengal National congress in protest against the police firing in Hijli.

Towards the end of 1930 and beginning of 1931 the situation was somewhat conducive to a settlement between the Government and the Congress as the Labour Party was in power in England and Capt. Wedgewood Benn was in India office. Also according to Subhas Lord Irwin's vision was broader than that of an average British politician and he had an innate sense of fairness and justice. On November 12 1930, the first Round Table Conference was held in London and Ramsay MacDonald, the British premier, was its Chairman. It had representations from British parties, Indian states and British India but none from Congress. To quote Subhas, "The net result of the first session of the Round Table Conference was the offer to India of two bitter pills — Safeguards and Federation. To make these pills eatable, they were sugar-coated with 'Responsibility'". The communal Muslims who were present in the conference accepted the proposal only if their demands around their community interests were settled satisfactorily. On Jan 19, 1931, the Round Table Conference was declared sine die. For the people of India there was only assurance for a better future and nothing else. On the day Ramsay MacDonald delivered his closing speech in the Round Table conference, the Viceroy made an appeal for the cooperation of Congress. Within a week of this Gandhiji and other Congress leaders were released. According to Subhas, "At Delhi, the Mahatma was surrounded by wealthy aristocrats and by politicians who were dying for a settlement and on the side of the Working Committee there was no one with sufficient personality who could force his views on the Mahatma. Even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who could have done so, failed on this occasion and as for the other members of the Working Committee, most, if not all, of them were more anxious for a settlement than the Mahatma himself." Jawaharlal Nehru who could have scuttled the pact, gave in, and on 5th March Gandhi and Irwin signed on the pact. When the pact created an uproar in the country, Nehru came up with a statement that he did not approve some of the conditions but as a loyal soldier he was obliged to follow. Subhas quipped, "But the

country had regarded him as something more than an obedient soldier." The pact was by all means a disaster esp. after the nation had revolted to such a great degree responding to the clarion call of her leaders. It was a betrayal of the people who laid down their lives for satyagraha and the others who suffered under a tyrannical, ruthless regime, hoping that Gandhi would deliver them from all evils. Even Congress loyalists of Gandhi wondered why Gandhi signed the pact. It was a great disappointment. Youth organizations were dissatisfied. To the uneducated masses it appeared like a great achievement. The annual session of the Congress was planned in Karachi and suspending the constitutional procedure for the election of a president, CWC elected Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, a staunch Gandhi loyalist. The capitalists assembled around Gandhi also pressurized for a peaceful settlement as their business interests were getting impacted. Left wingers in Congress were at a great disadvantage as many of them were in prison and others like Srinivasa Iyengar had resigned, peeved by the shabby treatment received. In Bengal J.M Sengupta and his group pledged loyalty to the Mahatma.

Subhas came out of the prison on March 8, 1931. He found that the Pact was a settled one and there was no possibility of preventing its ratification in the Karachi Congress. Subhas had a long conversation with Mahatma in Bombay and told him that he would support Gandhi as long as he stood for independence. Gandhi gave him certain assurances to that effect, like mandate in Karachi Congress for the Round Table Conference would contain nothing that would be inconsistent with the demand for independence in Lahore Congress and that "he would use all his influence and strain every nerve to secure amnesty for those who had been left out in the Pact." (Indian Struggle). From Bombay Mahatma Gandhi traveled to Delhi and Subhas also traveled with him. Subhas saw that Gandhiji received standing ovation from a large crowd everywhere. It appeared to Subhas that Gandhi's "popularity had reached the high-water mark." In Delhi they received a news that Government had decided to execute Sardar Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru in the Lahore conspiracy case. To be fair Gandhiji tried but not as far as to give an ultimatum to the Viceroy that the execution would be against the spirit of the Pact as he did not want to identify himself with the revolutionaries. Viceroy assured Gandhiji that he would look into the matter and people thought that the execution would be put off. But in March 24 when the Congress was about to meet in Karachi, Bhagat Singh and his comrades were hanged. The manner in which their dead bodies were surreptitiously disposed also created anger. When Mahatma arrived in Karachi there were hostile demonstrations everywhere and he was shown black flag with shouts of "Go back". Subhas and the leftists decided not to oppose the Congress Working Committee resolutions so as to not to divide the house.

Subhas presided over a meeting of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, the organization of Bhagat Singh, in Karachi. Subhas criticized the Gandhi Irwin Pact and the criticism met with general approval at the Youth Congress. A resolution was adopted condemning the Delhi Pact. Once again the fight was aborted by Gandhi when it had reached the crescendo, 1922 was repeated, albeit in a different way. Subhas's assessment was that the Pact was a curse. Gandhi could have achieved more through better bargaining. He said in Indian Struggles, "So far as the Mahatma is concerned, he alternates between obstinacy and leniency and moreover, he is too susceptible to personal appeals — and with such habits of mind, it is difficult to get the better of one's opponent in political bargaining." One of the issues was that the pact never pushed for an inquiry into all the police atrocities and excesses committed. That kind of inquiry, even on papers, would at least have checked the police brutalities. Mahatma also failed to secure amnesty for all classes of prisoners, thus alienating further the revolutionaries and the trade union classes.

Round Table Conference in which Gandhiji was the sole representative for Congress, ended in a great debacle as Indian Freedom Movement got nothing in return for stopping the Civil Disobedience Movement which was reaching its peak. Indian Independence Movement suffered a set back from which it took a very long time to recover, only after the start of the World War 2



Round Table Conference and Mahatma Gandhi: Image courtesy creative commons

Round Table Conference - British Divide and Rule policy and Mahatma's failure

The Government was plainly buying time for dealing with Congress. They now knew its leaders, who were more dangerous and who were benign and they could formulate their strategy in dealing with that body accordingly. Subhas was always the number one enemy because of his uncompromising stance. During the Round Table Conference, while the spirit of the Delhi truce was still on, Government was already planning for the next strike at Congress and this was sounded by Dr. M.A Ansari. Gandhiji had declared peace unilaterally, his olive branch was responded with brute force. New Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, who was opposed to any armistice, was preparing for a fight. Mahatma Gandhi had been the sole representative of the Congress in the second Round Table Conference. Subhas wondered, "Was it (the decision to send only Mahatma as representative) due to the vanity of the Mahatma who wanted to appear before the world as the sole representative of the dumb millions of India? Or was it merely one more error of judgment on the part of the Working Committee? Or was there some other motive behind the decision?" The first move of Mahatma, after Karachi Congress, according to Subhas, was not a prudent one, but the second one (to go alone to the RT conference) was a blunder. He was also conciliatory to the reactionary communal Muslim forces and this emboldened the two nation theory backers like M.A Jinnah. Subhas opposed the separate electorate demand from the communal section and expressed clearly his opinion to Gandhiji. The Nationalist Muslim leader like Dr. Ansari also supported him to press for a common electorate. Here Subhas comments that in the light of that incident the "attitude of the Nationalist Moslems in 1934 to the Prime Minister's Communal Award is inexplicable." Subhas also got the information that the British strategy in the Round Table Conference would be to divide the Indian representations on the basis of minor issues so that they never came to an agreement on the major issues. He informed Gandhiji. But events took place exactly as Subhas saw them happening.

With the assumption of office by Willingdon, situation had deteriorated in terms of the treatment of the Indians in the hands of the British administration. Gandhi went ahead with his London visit plan to participate in the Round Table Conference, dressed in his loin cloth. Gandhi also made a tour of Europe on his return, but he did not meet any prominent European leader to raise the issue of Indian independence. He visited Geneva but did not meet the League of Nation officials. He met Romaine Rolland. He also met Mussolini, and his hobnobbing with the Fascist leaders was universally criticized by the anti-Fascist Europeans and thus ended the possibility of gaining their sympathy for India's cause. On his return Gandhi was disheartened to see the hard stance of the British in every province and the arrest of the prominent Nationalist

leaders. His request for a meeting with the Viceroy was turned down. Subhas had advised Gandhi to not to seek an interview but others had differed with him, and once again Subhas was proved right. On 4 Jan 1932 Government issued orders for the arrest of the Congress leaders across the country before they could launch another Civil Disobedience. Gandhi's naivety and British treachery was now clear as daylight. On 5th January Subhas was arrested in the Kalyan station while returning from Bombay in the Calcutta Mail. He was first sent to Seoni prison and then, when he fell ill on account of food troubles, was sent to Jabalpur prison where he was lodged together with his elder brother Sarat Bose. Even here he was not keeping well and had to be transferred to Madras prison.

Ramsay MacDonald declared Communal Award on 17 Aug for allocating certain no. of seats on the basis of separate electorate, thus paving the way for the Partition of India in the future. Mahatma commenced his fast unto death on 20 Sep. On the fifth day of the fast an agreement was reached in Pun. e and separate electorate as the issue was done away with. This fasting soon became an international news item. Both Jawaharlal and Subhas were unhappy with the turn of the events. Subhas rued that so far international community knew of only one problem of India, that its subjugation under the British rule and its resistance to it. Now they got to know that she had an internal problem as well, that of caste divisions. British thought that "Gandhi's stock was so low and the civil disobedience movement was such a failure that he launched the fast unto death in Yeravada prison." Dr. Ambedkar termed the fast as a sheer political stunt. Congress activities dwindled and Civil Disobedience came to an end abruptly. Gandhi's fast in September 1932 and May 1933 and his increasing involvement in the untouchability issue at the expense of country's demands for freedom, were the only issues that grabbed National headlines.

Subhas had been observing all these developments from behind the bar. He had rounded up the personality of the Mahatma. He said in the Indian Struggles while trying to dissect the main reasons behind the Mahatma's inability to attain independence, "There was another deeper cause which accounted for the Mahatma's failure. During his stay in England he had to play two roles in one person, the role of a political leader and that of a world-teacher. Sometimes he conducted himself not as a political leader who had come to negotiate with the enemy, but as a master who had come to preach a new faith — that of non-violence and world-peace. Because of his second role, he had to spend much of his time with people who were quite useless in promoting his political mission. In the absence of advisers from his own party, the place was filled by

some of his British admirers. From the moment of his landing in Europe till the moment of his departure, he was surrounded by them."

On a hindsight it is absolutely true. Mahatma Gandhi tried to play the dual role of being a Mahatma and a Gandhi and he failed in both roles. As wisely summed up by Swami Ashokananda of Vedanta Society of San Francisco, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who was a bitter critic of Gandhi even while he was the head of Advaita Ashrama, "Gandhi had a pet hobby, ahimsa, and he put his hobby before the interests of the country."

Probably in future an unbiased class of historians would evaluate Gandhi's contribution to the Indian freedom movement in a more holistic and realistic way. This is not as a mark of disrespect for Gandhiji. His contributions were significant, esp. in raising the consciousness of masses to their right to self-determine their future and to get rid of the foreign yoke. But he alone did not bring independence to India, nor could his path of ahimsa ensure the achievement of that final goal as the later events would prove.

The Civil Disobedience Movement therefore started with a bang but ended with a whimper. However this period from 1927 to 1932 was extra ordinary for the rise of a mature and level headed Pan India leader who was only third in popularity to Gandhi and Nehru duo across India. Subhas Chandra Bose had really arrived on the national theater, out of the protective cover of Deshbandhu and out of the boundaries of Bengal province.

Characteristics of a great leader - How Subhas withstood persecution

(adapted from St. Nihal Singh's reminiscences - A Saint Turns Patriot)

Subhas showed great courage in the face of adversity and persecution. He stood as the embodiment of his assertion that "If we aspire to become the makers of history we should be prepared for any amount of misunderstanding and any degree of persecution. For the most unselfish actions we should be prepared to get abuse and vilification; from our closest friends we should be prepared to get unwarranted hostility."

- 1) In 1928 during Calcutta Congress he was the G.O.C of the Volunteer corps and was in charge of the Congress pandal at Park Circus. A group of over 30,000 labourers from the workshops in and around Calcutta had demanded free admission. They wanted to occupy places for which others had paid admission

fee. Subhas, with his handful of volunteers resisted unless there was any order from the High Command. Mob was infuriated and threatened to attack the pandal. Subhas prepared to protect it with his life. Timely intervention of Pandit Motilal Nehru ensured that entry was allowed to the labourers in an orderly and organized way. Subhas was praised for the exemplary courage displayed against an unreasonable demand.

- 2) In 1930, in a Trade Union Congress meeting in Tatanagar, of which Subhas Chandra Bose was the President, a rival group hurled brickbats at the President on the dais. However intrepid Subhas did not give in or took shelter elsewhere, and he continued from the very dais. The design of the opposition was defeated.
- 3) On April 21, 1931, the Pathan warders in Alipore Central Jail pounced on a group of young revolutionaries who had refused to board the police van in order to get their demands discussed with the jail superintendent. Subhas and a few other fellow prisoners had arrived at the scene and protested against the inhuman treatment meted out to the under-trial prisoners. The warders turned upon Subhas and beat him mercilessly. Subhas was rendered unconscious by the blows and few intrepid revolutionaries like Major Satya Gupta tried to protect him. Despite the attack, Subhas did not budge an inch from the spot. He shared the pains and the tribulations of the fellow revolutionaries. Bengal Volunteers took revenge when Binoy Bose, Badal Gupta and Dinesh Gupta stormed into the Writer's Building and shot dead I.G Prisons, Simpson, who had unleashed the hyenas on Subhas and other revolutionaries.
- 4) On 26 January 1931, Subhas, the Mayor of Calcutta, organized a meeting to commemorate the declaration of independence about a year back, despite threat from the police who had banned the procession. Mounted police seriously assaulted Subhas and his comrades who included a large number of women. Police tried to snatch away the Congress flag Subhas was holding but he would not yield despite his grievous injury.
- 5) He was equally reckless about the loss of personal liberty. He violated section 144 in several instances and courted imprisonment instead of indignity of surrendering to the brute forces.

"It is a very, very rough road that leads to the height of greatness"

Path to Greatness

Gandhiji and Subhas Bose, a comparative evaluation by history, Subhas's travel to Europe, exile

An Evaluation of Mahatma Gandhi

Dr. R.C Majumdar in his History of Freedom Movement of India, vol. 3 has made the following observations about Subhas and Gandhiji. He observed that there were two categories of followers of Gandhiji in Congress, one "who willingly surrendered their conscience and judgment to the safe keeping of the political Guru", and the other "who fell a victim to the magic charm of Gandhi even though they fumed and fretted at his obsolete views and inexplicable or irrational dogmas repulsive to their own independent judgment." The second category included Jawaharlal Nehru. Dr. Majumdar said, "No wonder that lesser men looked upon Gandhi almost as a divine being, the truth of whose words and views must not be questioned on any account." He continues, "There is a popular notion, sustained by catching slogans, that Gandhi achieved India's freedom by the method of Satyagraha and thus laid down for the subject peoples all over the world a unique method for gaining independence without bloodshed. Of course, Gandhi's own statement leaves no doubt that Satyagraha had never any fair trial in India's struggle for freedom, and, as such, cannot claim any credit for it. But there were other deep-seated differences between Gandhi and his followers. He placed the cult of non violence above everything else—even above the independence of India." He goes on, "As a matter of fact Gandhi realized, late in life, that a wide gulf had always separated him from his followers though they all submitted to his authority. Gandhi realized at long last that slave-driving may be an agreeable pastime and a great source of strength to a leader, but it does not pay in the long run. For, like ordinary slaves, the slave-followers of Gandhi gradually turned against his leadership and revolted against his authority. It is not often realized by many that since the failure of the 'Quit India' movement Gandhi's political influence waned more and more as the achievement of freedom approached nearer and nearer. That Gandhi played a very great role in rousing the political consciousness of the masses nobody can possibly deny. But it would be a travesty of truth to give him the sole credit for the freedom of India, and sheer nonsense to look -upon Satyagraha (or Charka, according to some) as the unique weapon by which it was achieved." Dr. Majumdar is brutally honest when he says, "The two great ends of Gandhi's life, to which even the freedom of India was a subordinate one, were to inculcate in the masses the spirit of non-violence and to bring about unity between the Hindus and Muslims by a change of heart. He

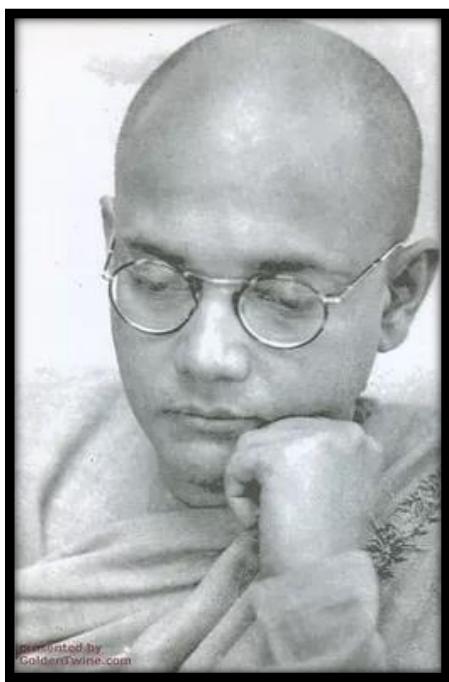
failed miserably in both and realized it only too well at the fag. end of his life. The cult of non-violence never took root in the hearts of the people." He goes on analyzing further - the failure to achieve the two great ideals of nonviolence and Hindu-Muslim unity led to the failure of Gandhi's third ideal, namely, to maintain the political unity of India. As usual, Gandhi held fast to his ideal almost till the last, when his dream of a united India was rudely shattered by the action of his own followers."

R.C Majumdar almost eulogizes Subhas Bose in his comparison with Gandhi, uncharacteristic of any Historian of National prominence post independence who hijacked the narrative. He says, "Next to Gandhi, the most dominant figure in the struggle for India's freedom was undoubtedly Subhas Chandra Bose. His unique personality shone forth when he, alone of all the leading figures in the inner circle of the Congress, kept himself unaffected by the magic charm of Mahatma Gandhi." He says, the fundamental difference between Gandhi and Subhas Bose is quite obvious. Gandhi's ideal in life was the establishment of Satyagraha, and everything else was secondary; even the freedom of India had no meaning or value to him in case it involved a sacrifice of this ideal. To Subhas Bose, on the other hand, the freedom of India was the only aim and object and no means was too mean for that purpose. Agreement between the two was, therefore, impossible. It is a sad commentary on contemporary politics that most of the Congress leaders at heart agreed with Bose in this respect, but sided with Gandhi."

In his Indian Struggle, Subhas Chandra Bose devoted one chapter (chapter 16) in analyzing the role of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian History. He neatly summed up, "He (Mahatma) has failed because the strength of a leader depends not on the largeness — but on the character — of one's following. With a much smaller following, other leaders have been able to liberate their country — while the Mahatma with a much larger following has not. He has failed, because while he has understood the character of his own people — he has not understood the character of his opponents. The logic of the Mahatma is not the logic which appeals to John Bull. He has failed, because his policy of putting all his cards on the table will not do. We have to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's — and in a political fight, the art of diplomacy cannot be dispensed with. He has failed, because he has not made use of the international weapon. If we desire to win our freedom through nonviolence, diplomacy and international propaganda are essential. He has failed, because the false unity of interests that are inherently opposed is not a source of strength but a source of weakness in political warfare. The future of India rests exclusively with those radical and militant forces that will be able to undergo the sacrifice and suffering necessary for winning freedom. Last

but not least, the Mahatma has failed, because he had to play a dual role in one person — the role of the leader of an enslaved people and that of a world-teacher, who has a new doctrine to preach. It is this duality which has made him at once the irreconcilable foe of the Englishman, according to Mr. Winston Churchill, and the best policeman of the Englishman according to Miss Ellen Wilkinson."

This distinction and comparison of the viewpoints between these two great leaders were necessary to set the perspectives on the next phase of Subhas's life, esp. his ascent to the throne of Congress presidency and his resign in the next Congress after a total non cooperation of Gandhiji and his followers. The objective of this exercise is not to demean Gandhi and show his contribution in a poor light, but to underline the fact that Gandhiji was a human being and not a Messiah, with all the associated failings of a human being. It is only the later historians and the politicians who have given him a cult status and all his shortcomings were deliberately erased from the history books to suit the narrative of a particular ideology.



In Vienna, Bose met Vithalbhai Patel, a senior Congress leader who was the elder brother of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.



Bose came back briefly to India in 1934 but was a little late to see his dying father. Government only allowed him few weeks to stay in India for completing the rituals

Vithalbhai and Bose issued a joint memorandum urging for continuing with Civil Disobedience. Subhas served Vithalbhai faithfully during the latter's illness. Vithalbhai left a large legacy with Subhas to continue with the freedom movement in a Will, which was later contested by Vallabhbhai Patel.

Travel to Europe

Subhas's health in the prison had begun failing. It was never well since his incarceration in the Mandalay, but now they had turned for the worse. Subhas was transferred from Madras Penitentiary to the Bahwali Sanatorium in October 1932. A note of dissent Of Dr. B. C Roy against the majority recommendation, prevented the Government from releasing Subhas, despite his ill health. Lt. Col. Buckley, who had been treating him, had recommended his transfer to Europe for a treatment. After prolonged deliberation, the Government of India granted permission despite their unwillingness, but they laid a condition that he would have to leave for Europe straight after release from prison and won't be able to meet his relatives or friends. He was released in Bombay and was immediately packed off to a Europe bound vessel S.S Ganges, on 23rd February, 1933. He arrived in Vienna in March 1933 for the treatment of Tuberculosis. The British knew that Subhas was their most dangerous enemy. He would use the opportunity of a stay in Europe to promote and propagate the cause of India, esp. among the leaders of the nations that are inimical to Britain. Therefore, the Government instructed all the British embassies and consulates to keep an active watch on Subhas's movements and activities. Subhas was denied meeting his aged parents by an insensitive and draconian Government as narrated below.

How Subhas was denied a fair opportunity of meeting his aged father and mother by the British

British Government had been waiting for an opportunity to send Subhas to jail. They had their moles in CWC. Somebody called "SS" in CWC had planted a story that Bose spoke in favour of the revolutionaries in a CWC meeting. However, Bengal Government was fearful of the consequences of arresting Bose from within Bengal and therefore the Government waited for an opportunity. In December 1931 Bose traveled to Bombay for a session of the Working Committee where he met Gandhiji. Bose was arrested from Kalyan station and taken to Seoni sub prison where he was put up under unbearable condition. His Mejda Sarat Bose too was arrested. Subhas became very ill and weak and was transferred to Jabalpur military hospital. Bengal Government did not allow Bose to enter within its limits and no other provinces were willing to take Bose as prisoner as they thought that the very presence of Bose would be enough to instigate a revolt, esp. among the students. In the end Madras presidency was forced to accept Bose as a prisoner. Medical examination showed that he was suffering from Tuberculosis and had to be given a treatment in a healthy place. It was finally decided to allow Subhas to travel to Switzerland if he would bear his own expenses. This was a

difficult proposition since the main bread earner of the Bose family, Sarat Bose, was in jail and Bibhavati Devi, his wife, was struggling to make both ends meet. His father and mother were aged and sick and would not be able to travel to meet him. But Bengal Government did not allow him to meet them. Bengal Government also set a limit to his meeting people for raising funds for the expenses of traveling and medical treatment. Just before he left for Europe, he was allowed to see Sarat in Jabbalpur jail, but was still not allowed to meet his parents. On 23rd February 1933 the Bombay police escorted him to the ship, the Ganges. Bose was escorted onboard on a stretcher (taken from Raj, Secrets and Revolution: A Life of Subhas Chandra Bose by Mihir Bose).

While Subhas was in Vienna, Gandhiji had entered into another fast. This time it was for three weeks and was primarily directed at untouchability eradication. His main grievance was that his followers were not giving sufficient importance to the problem of the harijans or the so-called depressed classes. The fast was given wide publicity across Europe (possibly British Government actively helped in publicizing) and once again India's internal differences hogged the limelight, thus raising doubts in the minds of the educated intellectuals of Europe whether India was ready for her independence and whether the British rule was more justified than a rule of the Indians. By then the Civil Disobedience movement had already petered out. Government decided to release Gandhi from prison as he was no longer a danger to them. The working President of Congress, Mr. Aney had suspended Civil Disobedience Movement as recommended by Gandhi. Gandhiji had requested the British to withdraw the ordinances and set free all political prisoners. Government was in no mood to oblige him.

In Vienna Subhas Chandra Bose got to see closely the functions of the local administrations. He got to know the social democrats who were ruling as well as the Fascists who were close to the Nazis of Germany. In Germany Adolf Hitler had consolidated his position and was all set to rule with an iron hand against the detractors. Subhas was attracted by the military discipline of the Fascists and the efficient functioning of the local administrations. He also developed friendship with the Mayor of Vienna Karl Sietz. At this time Vithalbhai Patel, ex Congress leader and elder brother of Sardar Patel was in Vienna for his treatment. Patel was one true leader; unlike his brother he was not a blind follower of Gandhi. After discussing together Patel and Bose decided that without taking foreign help India will not get liberation. They together worked on and issued a Manifesto which condemned Gandhi's decision and advocated for a more decisive leadership. According to Girija Mukherjee, biographer and journalist, "both of them felt that the only effective way in which India's freedom could be hastened was to make it an issue between nations so that Britain could be made to face the

problem of having to seriously alter its foreign policy because of India. So convinced they were of the need of international contact that Vithalbhai Patel, who was suffering from serious ailments, left the money he possessed, in a Will, to Subhas Bose so that he might carry on anti-British campaign in foreign countries. There was much litigation about this Will in Bombay High Court (as Sardar Patel did not take it too kindly that his brother left his legacy to Subhas), but this fact revealed that at least two outstanding Congress leaders had come to the same conclusion and wanted to widen the sphere of activities of the Indian National Congress outside India's borders. Subhas Bose, specially from his extensive reading in Italian history and literature, had come to the conclusion that like the Italian freedom leaders. Garibaldi and Mazzini, Indian leaders should also try to enlist support in quarters and in countries which were anti-British in order to make it uncomfortable for Britain in India and to force Britain to grant independence to India immediately."

Subhas had also nursed Patel senior when the latter was seriously ill and therefore Patel senior showed his gratitude in leaving behind his wealth amounting to Rs 100,000 to Subhas for the national work that he intended to carry out. Sardar Patel contested that Will and seeing the possibility of a bitter dispute, Subhas voluntarily gave up his right on that legacy. This incident is a blot on Sardar Patel, which shows how blind hatred, jealousy and ideological differences can cause even greater human beings to stoop low.

The details regarding the Will and how Subhas Chandra Bose was yet again insulted by the Congress leadership is narrated below.

The Will of Vithalbhai Patel

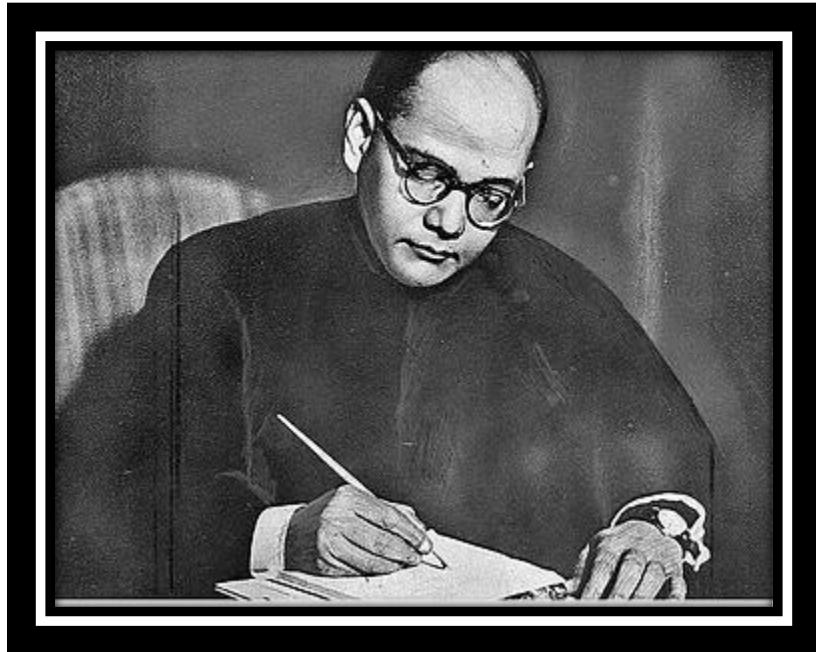
Adopted from the anecdote of N.C Mitra - Subhas Chandra Bose - The Crisis. On 2nd October 1933, Vithalbhai Patel, elder brother of Vallabhbhai Patel, made his Will in Switzerland. He had appointed Mr. Govardhanbhai Patel and Dr. Purshottamdas Patel to be the executors. His entire assets after disposal of the four minor gifts were to be handed over to Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose, to be spent by him or his nominee for the political upliftment of India preferably for the cause of publicity on behalf of India in other countries. In his Will he also desired that in case of his death in Europe, Subhas Chandra Bose should take charge of his body and make necessary arrangements for sending it to Bombay for cremation on the Chowpatty sands alongside the place where Lokmanya Tilak's body was cremated. Vithalbhai Patel died in October 1933, and Subhas Chandra Bose fulfilled his desire regarding his cremation.

The probate of the Will of Vithalbhai Patel was obtained from the High Court of Bombay in September, 1934. The payment to Subhas Chandra Bose was never made. The executors contented that a scheme had to be made and trustees should be appointed with the approval of the executors before the fund could be paid to Subhas Chandra Bose. They suggested names that would seem outrageous - like M.A Jinnah, for being the trustee. The contention was unjustified and uncalled for and the implied intention was malafide. The executors knew that Subhas would never agree to the proposal for the sheer indignity of it. Subhas Chandra Bose rightly said that a scheme would be formed once the funds reach him and in view of the clear directions in the Will the question of appointment of trustees did not arise. He however said that he would, when necessary, appoint a consultative committee to assist Subhas in carrying out the directions of Vithalbhai Patel. The executors were working with the clear and explicit approval of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The executors, when asked directly whether their contention stemmed from their lack of confidence on Subhas's integrity now directly opposed the bequest saying that it was invalid in law. The executors put the matter in court on 29th January, 1939, just before the Presidential Election and Tripuri Congress session, thus revealing their hidden agenda. Justice Wadia, a British stooge, of Bombay High Court, held the legacy to be void and gave the amount to the heirs of Vithalbhai Patel, viz. the family of the Sardar Patel. The matter went up to the appellate authority but the Chief Justice confirmed the judgement of the original court in September 1939. In October 1940, Vallabhbhai Patel, on behalf of the heirs of Vithalbhai Patel sent a cheque of Rs 1 lakh that represented the amount bequeathed, to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad for acceptance by the Working Committee and for appointing a committee consisting of himself, Jamnalal Bajaj, Bhulabhai Desai and the President of the Congress, to spend the amount as the committee would think fit. The letter written by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in accepting the fund suggested that the contentions were specifically in order to address the anxiety that the funds were applied for the purpose intended. The moot question here is, was this anxiety justified or does it point to a hidden sinister agenda of the Congress leaders to deprive Subhas of his key characteristics - Integrity - which they continued doing even after his disappearance. We would see more such instances from the Congress leaders.

While in Europe Subhas also attended to the ailing Kamala Nehru, whose husband was still in prison in India. The manifesto of Bose and Patel did not produce the intended result as Gandhi was in the middle of a fast. However, in the international arena it had its desired effect. According to Giriya Mukherjee, "The Manifesto issued by Patel and Bose is indeed a landmark in the history of India's freedom struggle. Until then, except Nehru's participation at Congress of League Against Imperialism at Brussels, no

important nationalist leader had taken the trouble to cultivate international opinion in India's favour." After the Nagpur session of Congress, the small publicity office in London was closed down by the Congress party. There was therefore no further means to establish communication with the international leaders and get their sympathy for India's cause and to highlight the problems faced by India under the foreign yoke. Girija Mukherjee further states that, "Mahatma Gandhi maintained the view that other nations would take notice of India only when Indians themselves made the situation so difficult for the foreign rulers that the whole world could not but take notice of it. This guideline was adopted for a number of years and when Patel and Bose met in Vienna, they came to the conclusion that this policy did India no good. No one knew outside India how British treated the Indians. News agencies which operated in India were controlled by the British and, at that period, only occasionally some American journalists, who visited India, could report for a short period to their newspapers. Although because of the extensive reportage in the Herst newspapers by their correspondent Carl Von Wiegand, the problem of Indian freedom came to be known and discussed, there was hardly any understanding and appreciation of Indian point of view abroad. On the other hand, in order to counteract some effects of reporting in the Herst newspapers, the British engineered the visit of an American writer called Catherine Mayo who wrote a scurrilous book on India called Mother India which, it was proved later, was highly subsidized by the British Government in order to defame Indian leaders and the nationalist movement. All this went to show that without an effective organization to counteract British propaganda against India in the world, Indian nationalists would not be able to make any headway because the indifference of the world outside India to the Indian cause was fully utilized by the British in delaying a discussion of the question of Indian independence." Vithalbhai Patel, like Bose, realized that the next stage of Nationalist Movement should also include a comprehensive programme for promoting and publicizing Indian struggle for freedom on the foreign countries.

We have already mentioned that Subhas Chandra Bose, who wrote Indian Struggle, had made a detail analysis of the role of Gandhiji and also narrated the true story of the freedom movement as experienced and narrated by a leader who was very closely associated with it. Therefore, this book became very popular in Europe. for the first time \the thinking people of Europe began to understand and appreciate the problems being faced by India, her challenges and her piteous conditions. Samuel Hoare, a conservative politician of Britain, made it illegal to promote Indian Struggle book in India, seeing its popularity in Europe. Bose also got good reception in the Balkan countries. While staying in Europe he tried his best to protest against the negative portrayals of India in various forums by the British and their colonial torch bearers who often presented a very distorted view of Indian, esp. Hindu societies, culture and people.



While in Germany Bose started to pen his narrative called Indian Struggles, from 1920 to 1934 after entering into a contract with a publishing agency. Fraulein Emilie Schenkl was recommended by Dr. Mathur to work as a stenographer to type the manuscripts. The book was banned in India. Later Bose worked on a second volume (struggles until 1942). In this book he had assessed Gandhiji and Nehru's contribution. Image source: Jayasree

In the meanwhile, Jawaharlal Nehru who was in Alipore prison was disillusioned with Gandhiji. Commenting on Jawaharlal, Subhas said in Indian Struggles, "With a popularity only second to that of Mahatma, with unbounded prestige among his countrymen, with a clear brain possessing the finest ideas, with an up-to-date knowledge of the modern world movements, that he should be found wanting in the essential qualities of the leadership, viz. the capacity to make decisions and face unpopularity if need be, was a great disappointment."

Subhas in Europe - The Foundations of a Future World Leader

In 1934 Bose came back to India for a short period on the receipt of a cable that his father was seriously ill. He could not see his father as Janaki Nath had died on the day before his arrival. This was a severe blow to Subhas. He had always regarded his father with utmost respect because of the moral discipline and exemplary life that he led. He was guilty of not being able to do enough and not fulfilling his father's aspirations and dreams about him. But he had made his father proud from all aspects. Janaki Nath,

from being an admirer and participant in the British administration, had developed bitter hostilities against the Government and gave away his Raibahadur title in 1930 in protest against the Government injustices. Subhas was very dear to his father and brothers. Subhas could spend only a month with his grieving family, esp. his mother as he was interned under Government regulation. While in India Subhas discussed extensively the political situation. He noted in his Indian Struggles that, "Contrary to the expectations of the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, the Congress Party had remarkable success at the polls (legislative assembly elections). It was clear that despite the repressive measures employed by Lord Willingdon's Government against the Congress Party from 1932 onwards, the vast majority of the people stood behind the Indian National Congress. It should be noted here that, unlike 1923-24, the parliamentary activity of the Congress was this time conducted by the Gandhi Wing." The president of Congress in 1935 was Babu Rajendra Prasad, who was an orthodox follower of Gandhiji. The new constitution for India by the British which came into effect in 1937 was rejected by the people because it was aimed at maintaining British rule under the new political set up, with the help of Indian princes and pro-British organizations. Congress Socialist Party emerged from the shadows to become more popular among youth and the radical section. Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience as well as the revolutionary activities had lost their appeal. The Communist Party of India, a small formation banned by British, had joined the platform of Congress Socialists to spread their ideals.

Subhas left for Europe in January 1935 for treatment of his failing health. Subhas Chandra Bose was initially allowed to visit Austria, Italy, France and Switzerland on medical grounds. He could get to travel to the Balkan countries of Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1933, along with Yugoslavia, Romania, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Originally he was not allowed to visit Germany or UK. But as a result of vigorous persuasion and support by few British MPs, he could visit Germany on medical grounds. But he was not permitted to visit England. He was also allowed to visit Poland, Belgium and Holland, but he could not secure a visa for Russia. Even though Subhas had a leftist bend of mind he was not exactly enamoured by Communist ideals. His initial thoughts were to curve out an ideal state by taking the good practices of both Fascism and Communism. Fascism acquired a negative contour only after WW2 and before that it was another political ideology, so there should not be any surprise. He of course saw through the hollowness of both the ideals when put to practice.

In 1935 Pandit Nehru was released from prison to enable him to join his wife Kamala Nehru who was on her death bed in Europe. Subhas Chandra Bose had helped Kamala Nehru to be brought to Badenweiler in Germany. Nehru stayed with his wife who passed away. Nehru also visited Paris and London from time to time and made important contacts there. In Italy and Germany, he avoided making any contacts possibly because of his personal dislike for Fascism. During his stay in Europe he published his autobiography which became immensely popular with the liberal section in England. In 1936 Nehru became the president of the Indian National Congress and presided over the annual session in Lucknow. He was reelected President and had the full support of Gandhi and his coterie. He took a middle ground among Gandhian wing and Congress socialists.

Between 1933 and 1936 Subhas toured almost the whole of Europe except for Russia to study the conditions of post WW-1 Europe. He visited Italy and Germany several times and in Rome he was received cordially by Mussolini. To quote from Indian Struggles, "He (Subhas) studied, on the one hand, the growth of the new forces that were ultimately to challenge the old order that had been set up by the Treaty of Versailles — and on the other, he studied the League of Nations which symbolized that old order. He was especially interested in the changes that had been brought about by the Treaty of Versailles and, for that purpose, he made it a point to visit Austria-Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Balkans. Through travel and study, he was able, not only to understand the situation in Europe at the time, but also to have a glimpse of coming events. In many countries in Europe, he was able to rouse interest in India and to help in founding organizations for developing contact with India. The tour concluded with a visit to Ireland, where he met President De Valera and other Ministers of his Government, as well as the leaders of the republican movement." He also spent sometime in Geneva studying the League of Nations and exploring possibility of using the League for furthering the cause of freedom of India. This was also the aim of Vithalbhai Patel. Patel was interested in carrying out international propaganda to further the cause of Indian Nationalism and was responsible for founding the Indo-Irish League in Dublin. After Patel's death in a Swiss sanatorium in 1933, Subhas worked collaboratively with the International Committee on India that had its headquarters in Geneva and that was set up by Madame E. Horup, and also helped in publishing a monthly bulletin on India in three languages, French, German and English. Towards the end of his stay Subhas realized rather belatedly that the League of the Nation was fully controlled by the main powers, Britain and France and it was impossible to use the league for India's liberty. Thereafter he spearheaded an agitation that India was wasting money by remaining a member of the League which would not help her. In

Czechoslovakia he met Dr. Benes, the foreign minister, studied the Czech Youth Movement and the history of the Czech Legion created outside that country during First World War with the help of England and Russia to fight for liberation against the Austrian occupation. He also met Prof. Lesney, the famous Czech Indologist. He visited Poland and learnt about the training of Polish Legion in Japan during WW-1 to free their country from Russian occupation. He had the sympathy and help from the Polish minister in Prague. All these knowledge and experience later helped in setting up the Indian Legion or the Azad Hind Government and army.

He visited Germany on grounds of medical examination but took the opportunity to meet some of the key Nazi leaders and officers of the foreign office to seek moral and material support for India. Before returning to India however Bose was thoroughly disillusioned with Hitler's Germany. He objected to some of the viewpoints of Hitler about India in his book *Mein Kampf*. He also said that, "I regret that I have to return to India with the conviction that the new Nationalism of Germany is not only narrow and selfish, but also arrogant." He met Mussolini in January 1935 and presented him a copy of his book, the *Indian Struggle* published in London in 1934. While staying in Rome, Subhas also met Amanullah, the king of Afghanistan, who was sympathetic to the cause of Indian independence.

Subhas has unequivocally followed a principle which he had advocated for his countrymen from Geneva in 1934, "In the domain of our external policy, our own socio-political views or predilections should not prejudice us against people or nations holding different views, whose sympathy we may nevertheless be able to acquire. This is a universal cardinal principle in external policy and it is because of this principle today in Europe a pact between Soviet Russia and Fascist Italy is not only a possibility but an accomplished feat. Therefore, in our external policy we should heartily respond to any sympathy for India which we may find in any part of the world." This was a worldview totally in contrast with that of Jawaharlal Nehru's, who only wanted popularity. Bose had one objective in mind - to play one imperialist force against another and thus weaken them considerably to achieve his own end. A great man had remarked much later, "In the matter of policy one should be able to combine Shakuni (who would pit one power against another by pretending to advise), Bhisma (the grand old man who would renounce his kingdom but fight for it selflessly) and Krishna (the divine incarnation who would decide the fate of humankind through superior policies and strategies, who would uphold righteousness or dharma against injustice or adharma).

On 3rd April 1935 Bose met Romaine Rolland in Geneva. The meeting was positive and Romaine Rolland, who had great respect for Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, having authored books on their lives, had great expectations from India to bring peace in the world. Bose visited Yugoslavia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Ireland. He was impressed by the achievements of Kemal Ataturk in modernizing Turkey. He became great friends with de Valera, the president of Ireland and leader of Sinn Fein. While observing the weaknesses of Communism Subhas had opined that Communism as a model would not work in India primarily because it is Godless and India is spiritual in its core. But he was certain that Communism will have some impact on the modern socio-economic development. About Nazis, Subhas admired their ability to plan, execute and work in a disciplined manner with a lightning speed.

Subhas's activities in London, are taken from the reminiscences of his nephew Amiya Nath Bose –

Subhas in London - Taken from Amiya Nath Bose's My Uncle

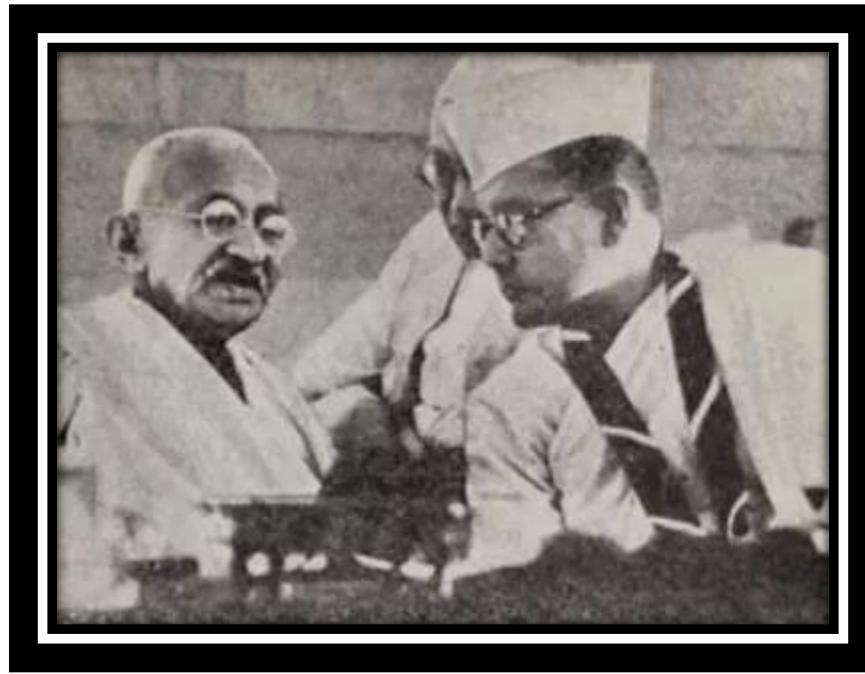
Subhas had gone to Badgastein in 1937 to recover from an illness and Amiya who was studying in Cambridge had come to give him company. A number of persons including Bose's secretary Emilie Schenkl, A.C.N Nambiar, were also there. During these days Bose completed his autobiography, An Indian Pilgrim. He intended to visit London before returning to India. He met the Indian residents in London in a Tea party, met Rajani Palme Dutta, the communist leader, and addressed a public meeting at Caxton Hall in London where Arthur Greenwood of the Labour Party presided and a large no. of labour MPs were present. He had a meeting with the President of Ireland, Eamon de Valera. He also met Sir Stafford Cripps. He was staying in Artillery Mansion. He met de Valera in the Piccadilly hotel and talked with him throughout the night.

Subhas in London - meets Bertrand Russell

In the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London (Charter House), in January 1938, where he addressed a meeting, Subhas met Lord Halifax. Director of the Charter House Prof. Arnold Toynbee presided over the meeting. He also met Bertrand Russell in Oxford at midnight and they spoke throughout the night. Russell told Subhas that Stalin was a crueler person than Hitler. Amiya Nath Bose was also present during that meeting.

The British Government and their spies in the meanwhile had been working full time to collect all information about Subhas, where he went, whom he met and so on. They had tried their best to portray him as a Communist in Fascist countries and as a Fascist in Socialist countries. Despite that Subhas received a warm welcome in all the countries

of Europe. He also helped in organizing cultural centers in these countries for establishing ties with India.



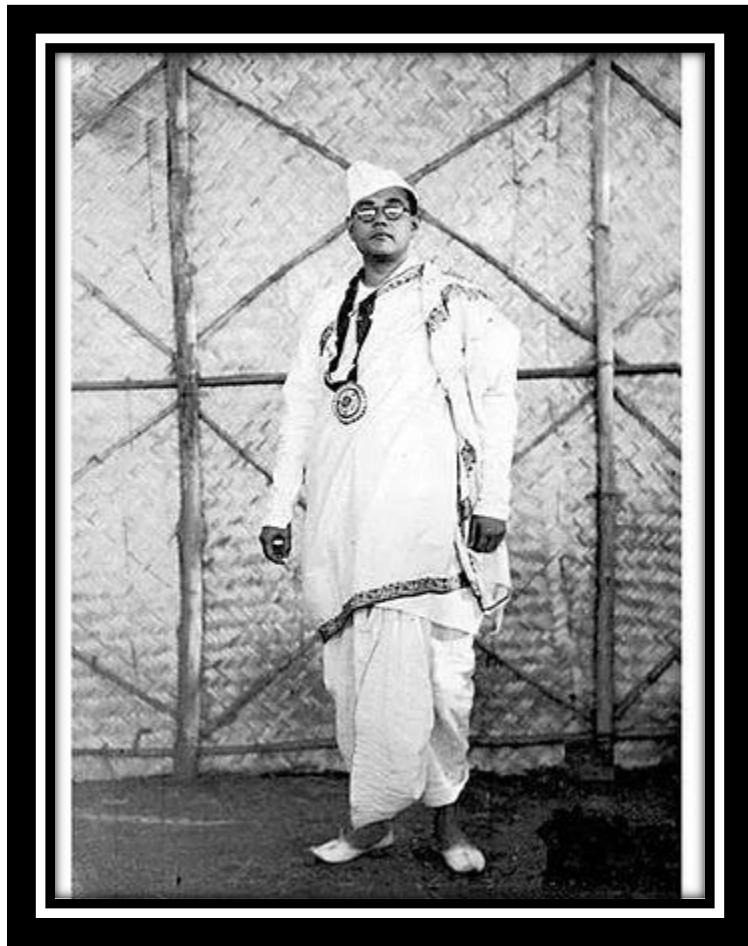
Subhas and Gandhiji in Haripura Congress, 1938

Image courtesy: Jayasree Facebook discussion page



Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru in Haripura Congress

Image courtesy: Facebook page of Jayasree publications



Haripura Congress and the Congress presidentship

Return to India: Haripura - President of Congress

In 1936 Subhas decided to respond to invitation of Nehru to take part in the Lucknow Congress. The British Government told him in uncertain terms that as soon as he landed in India he would be arrested. On 11 April he landed in Bombay amidst thousands of people who had gathered to welcome him. The British Government kept its words and arrested him and put him in the Arthur road prison in Bombay. His message to the masses was, "Keep the flag of freedom flying." British Government defended their stance in the face of a public outcry, that Bose had been intimately associated with the revolutionary movements, killing of public servants, and had advocated parallel Government in Lahore Congress. He was the inspiration behind the armoury raid in Chattagram and founded the Samyavadi Sanghata movement in 1932 that was rechristened as Hindustan Socialist Republican Army. He also had plans to win over the Indian army and police. In sort he had a definite belief in violent revolution and was therefore dangerous. He also had tremendous organizing capacity and intellect.

From Bombay, Subhas Bose was taken to Yeravada Central prison on 13 April, 1936. On 10 May a countrywide Hartal was observed to protest against his detention. On account of ill health, he was released and put under house detention in Kurseong in his brother's house. Several British MPs had stood up for Subhas Bose like Mr. Kelly, Miss Wilkinson, Mr. Jagger, Mr. Williams, Mr. Sorensen. But British Government feared Bose. They could not set him free as they were afraid that he would organize revolutionary activities in no time. They regarded Bose as a "man of great ability, a genius", who could conjure situations that would be detrimental to the interests of the Government in India. Bose was released from his internment in a Calcutta hospital in March 1937 after the parliamentary elections were over under the new Constitution of India which was passed by British in 1935 separating Burma from India. In these elections Congress party had emerged victorious in seven out of eleven provinces. All the political prisoners were set free, except those in Bengal and in Andamans. Soon the prisoners in Andamans started hunger strike and they were brought to the prisons of the mainland.

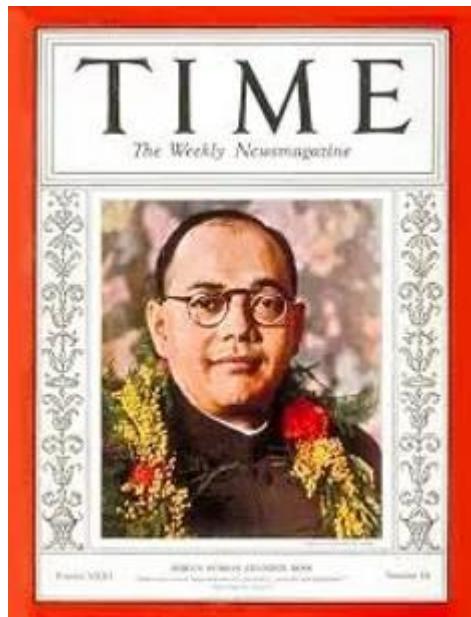
In December 1937 Bose went to Badgastein, the health resort in Austria again and from there to England as the ban on his entry was removed. In January 1938, while in England he learnt that he was unanimously elected as the President of the Congress. The British press gave wide coverage to his activities in England. He met members of the British parliament like Lord Halifax and Lord Zetland as well as eminent members of the Liberal and Labour parties sympathetic to India's cause like Mr. Attlee, Sir Stafford Cripps, Mr. Harold Laski, Lord Allen etc. During his stay in England Subhas Chandra Bose also met Rajani Palm Datta, the Communist leader. He said that Indian National Congress should be organized in broadest anti-Imperialist term and should have two objectives of winning political freedom and establishing a socialist regime. He also said that when we wanted a synthesis of Fascism and Communism, Fascism had not started its Imperialist tendencies and he merely meant its aggressive Nationalistic ideals. Also as regards Communism he felt that initially it was perceived to be anti-National but now he was fairly satisfied that communism supported national independence. This was not a very definite position, but Bose merely wanted to be politically correct and win friends for India. He had no other motive in praising Communism or in taking great pains to justify his own statements.

Bose returned to India in January 1938. The 51st session of Congress started in Haripura in Gujarat in 19 February. In his speech Bose referred to the problems and elaborated the policy to be adopted. In his own words in Indian Struggle, He "did his

best to stiffen the opposition of the Congress Party to any compromise with Britain and this caused annoyance in Gandhian circles who were then looking forward to an understanding with the British Government." The Haripura session on the bank of the Tapti river was a grand affair. It was planned to be held in Vithalnagar, named after Vithalbhai Patel. 51 pillars were erected, 51 National Flags were flying. 51 bullock carts formed a convoy that brought Subhas Chandra Bose, the uncrowned king of India, for then the Congress presidents were looked upon in that way. The procession was led by Subhas's arch rival, Sardar Patel. Subhas reached on 12 February. Rajagopalachari, who was a die-hard Gandhi loyalist and stood in opposition to Subhas, was conspicuous by his absence. On 14th February the Congress Working Committee met. On 16th February Jawaharlal, the outgoing president handed over the responsibilities to Subhas. On 19th February Subhas hoisted the National flag. In his illuminating speech Subhas referred to internal and external problems and outlined an approach that would be acceptable for all factions within Congress. He started by criticizing the British Imperialism and sounded a note of warning on British Divide and Rule. He predicted that British ingenuity would seek some other constitutional device for partitioning India, thereby neutralizing the transfer of power to Indian people. He pointed out the inherent weaknesses within the empire owing to the geopolitical complications and predicted its dismantling under pressure from within and without. On the question of minorities, he said that Indians should follow a policy of live and let live. He correctly diagnosed the problems of India as poverty, illiteracy, diseases and outlined the policies of scientific production and distribution along socialist lines to be the panacea. He wanted a strong central Government with autonomy for the provinces along cultural and Governmental affairs. For the national language he proposed a mixture of Hindi and Urdu with Roman script. He also wanted to control the increase in population. He also outlined his vision for India's foreign policy, that it should not be influenced by the internal politics of any country or form of state. He cited in this matter the example of Soviet Russia. He wanted to promote Indian culture through the foreign press, art exhibitions and films. He also did not view the British people as enemy but pointed out that there was a growing and influential section who increasingly empathized with India's demand for independence. Subhas declared that, "Ours is a struggle not only against British Imperialism but against World Imperialism as well, of which the former is the keystone. we are therefore fighting not for the cause of India alone, but for humanity as well. India freed means humanity saved."

Later in the year 1938 he launched the National Planning Committee for drawing up a comprehensive plan for industrialization and national development. He inducted his dedicated and loyal but deserving followers like Leela Roy as the members of the

planning committee, as well as scientists like Dr. Meghnad Saha, and P.C Roy, and proposed Jawaharlal Nehru to be its Chairman. Bose also took initiative of sending a Medical Mission to China in July 1938. He was completely democratic in his approach and action. Even Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who was no Bose follower, remarked that Subhas was singularly free from any desire to take sides or parade his own ideas. Despite his illness, Subhas tried his best to propagate the ideals and his visions among people, particularly the youth, across India. On March 7, 1938 Bose appeared on the cover of Time Magazine.



Time Magazine recognizes
the most dangerous enemy
of the Empire



With Patel, Kripalani and other Gandhi
loyalists. A year down the line they will rally
together to overthrow Bose in an obnoxious
way

"You cannot free one half of your soul and keep the other half in bondage"

Sacrifice – Price of Freedom

Congress's most inglorious chapter - Tripuri Congress, Subhas resigns and forms Forward Bloc

Tripuri Congress and its Aftermath - Resignation of Bose from Congress

Throughout 1938, Bose worked ceaselessly for implementing the plan of action formulated in Haripura. He convened in Bombay a conference of heads of the Congress provincial ministries. They discussed on National reconstruction in the lines of industrialization, resources, coordination among Congress ruled states and advocated special focus on poverty eradication through better healthcare and education by restructuring the municipal corporations. He asked them to do their best for the underprivileged sections. He also had meetings with the scientific fraternity and was particularly close to Dr. Meghnad Saha, the renowned physicist. On October 2, in a meeting convened with the industries ministries of Congress ruled provinces, Bose set a goal to see that every man, woman and child was better clothed, better educated and had sufficient time for recreation and culture. He assured Gandhians that he was supportive of their desire to develop cottage industries, but not at the cost of industrialization. The first meeting of National Planning committee was held in Bombay on December 17, 1938. Bose also tried resettling the Hindu-Muslim unity issue by calling for a meeting with Jinnah in May, 1938. But the equation had become complicated when Nehru in 1937 had questioned the very basis of the Muslim League. After a series of discussions, Subhas had to abort the attempt. Despite his obvious leanings, Bose tried to be fair in his dealing with left and the right wing and wanted to take everybody along.

In September 1938 a crisis emerged when the members of the Congress socialist party staged a workout over a difference with the conservatives. Bose sided with the Gandhians. He also sided with Gandhi in dealing with a crisis in the Central provinces when he and CWC had to dismiss Dr. Khare, the Congress prime minister of that province. Subhas also played a major role in ousting the Muslim League ministry in Assam and installing the Nationalist leader Gopinath Bordoloi. In 1938 Subhas and Sarat Bose also initiated a programme of formation of a broad-based coalition Government in Bengal with both Hindus and Muslims. It needed the support of Gandhi which never came. Instead Gandhi, in presence of G.D Birla and Nalini Sarkar (the latter being a part of the original problem), rejected the proposal and idea. Bose thought that it was not pragmatic of Gandhi to come to a conclusion without even understanding the

problem as Bengal was at a cross road. He thought that the rejection would be suicidal for Bengal in the long run and later events proved him right. Subhas Bose also alienated the old guards of the Congress by his proposal to launch an inquiry into the conduct of the Congress ministries, as he thought that they were getting addicted to power and the lure of money.

As Congress president Bose was far sighted enough in encouraging sending cultural troupes to Europe and America such as that of Uday Shankar's. He had also keen eyes on the international political affairs, esp. the situation in Europe. He understood that the possibility of a war was looming large and therefore wanted to reap the full benefits by cornering the British who would be engulfed in that war. By the end of the year 1938 he was strongly of opinion that the international situation called for launching another mass movement which would take the British off guard and here was a wonderful opportunity. He did not lose his spiritual goals. After becoming president Subhas Chandra Bose paid a visit to an ailing Swami Abhedananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and a powerful orator. Embracing Subhas, Swami Abhedananda blessed him with the words, "Be thou victorious", thus putting his stamp of approval on Subhas's actions for freeing India. However, Sri Aurobindo in his conversations seemed to have somewhat an ambivalent attitude towards Subhas. He did not support Gandhi either, but he could not wholeheartedly accept Subhas's leaning towards leftism and esp. his collaboration with the Axis forces whom he considered to be greater evil than the British. After India achieved freedom Aurobindo seemed to have somewhat changed his opinion about Subhas Chandra Bose and leaned to the positive side. It is to be noted that Subhas's close friend Dilip Kumar Roy was a staunch associate of Aurobindo and in his correspondences with Subhas he had disagreements with Subhas on the methods and means adopted by him. On January 21, 1939, Bose visited Shantiniketan. Rabindranath Tagore's worldview about Subhas had undergone a huge transformation from 1937 onwards and he regarded Subhas as a Deshnayak and the only hope for Bengal.

It is difficult to understand why Gandhiji supported Subhas's nomination as Congress president. Perhaps he thought that like Jawaharlal he can also bring Subhas under his ideological fold, thereby vanquishing the burgeoning left wing within Congress, esp. the Socialists. But Subhas proved to be of different temperament. His ascendancy brought a positive change within Congress and raised the hopes of people. Bose's vision of an industrialized economy through planning commission was in direct confrontation with Gandhian ideal of village economics based on Khadi and small-scale industries. In matters of policy decisions Gandhian coterie was opposed to any idea of confrontation

with the British Government, while Subhas advocated taking full advantage of the war like situation in Europe.

When Subhas sought a reelection to presidentship, as he thought that one year was not sufficient to implement all his plans and programmes, the Gandhi wing of Congress opposed it and proposed the name of Pattabhi Sitaramayya as the president. Initially they had also proposed the name of Abul Kalam Azad, who eventually stepped down in favour of Sitaramayya. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad issued a certificate of good character in favour of Pattabhi Sitaramayya and hoped that his election would be unanimous. Congress Working Committee wanted Gandhiji to nominate president while Subhas had forced them to go for an election. Working committee members Vallabh Bhai Patel, Acharya Kripalani, Bhulabhai Desai, Rajendra Prasad, all Gandhi loyalists and staunch anti Subhas, became supporters of Sitaramayya. As a rule, they should not have done the same. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai protested against this unrighteousness. Objections came from Meher Ali, socialist leaders Narendra Dev, Sardar Shardul Singh and other socialist leaders against the behavior of the CWC. When the election results came out Subhas had won by over 200 votes. Gandhi clan was decimated in the one and only one real election in the entire history of the Congress. Throughout this battle Subhas had avoided all personal references and also had refrained from publicly proclaiming himself as superior to his rival. His arguments were based on political considerations. He fought on the basis of ideas and principles.

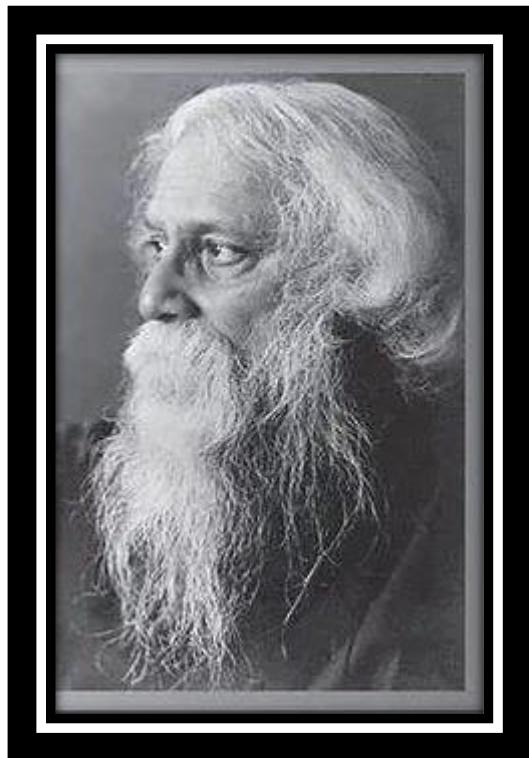
Then came the twist. Gandhiji gave a public statement that Sitaramayya's defeat was his own defeat. As an afterthought he had mentioned that Subhas babu was not an enemy of the country, he had suffered for it. Even Dr. Pattavi must have been surprised by this statement. Subhas was not elated by this victory. He knew that a conflict was imminent. With a desire to work out a compromise Subhas went to Sevagram, but came back disappointed. Gandhi refused to participate in the disagreement between CWC and Subhas. In 1936 the same Gandhiji had taken initiative to resolve the disagreement between CWC and his poster boy Jawaharlal Nehru. On 22nd February the CWC meeting was supposed to begin in Wardha but Bose fell ill. Dr. Nilratan Sarkar advised against travel. Subhas appealed for a deferment of the session. But nobody paid any heed. The entire CWC had resigned, except Nehru and Sarat Bose. Nehru gave a small statement that whatever the CWC members did were in sync with democratic norms. Gandhi clan had also resigned from the parliamentary board, so battle lines were drawn. Subhas had pneumonia in both the lungs and yet, despite all warnings of his doctors, he started for the Tripuri session of Congress. He traveled by train to Jabalpur, from where he was taken by a stretcher to an ambulance and was carried to the Congress

venue. His political opponents, the Gandhi wing, had propagated that Subhas was feigning illness. But the doctors found him to be genuinely ill. His address, which was much shorter than the one at Haripura, was read by Mejda Sarat Bose. He asked for an ultimatum to the British Government and wanted to launch a Civil Disobedience if no response was coming from the Government's side. He had sensed that British would now be in trouble because of the impending war in Europe and this was the God sent opportunity to go for a direct fight.

Gandhi did not come to Tripuri. He had gone to a small princely state of Rajkot. Gandhi clan now played hard ball. Govind Ballabh Pant, Congress premier of United Province brought a resolution that the Congress Working Committee must be according to the wishes of Gandhiji. Congress left wing opposed but still the resolution passed through because Socialist Party betrayed and abstained from voting. It left the Congress president tied to the wishes of Gandhi. Subhas was thoroughly disgusted. One of the Congress leaders did not hesitate to even compare Gandhi's popularity with that of Hitler's and Mussolini's. British author Michael Edwardes observed that, "Gandhi now turned the technique of non-cooperation, not against the British, but against Congress's own president." Let us see what Subhas himself felt about the whole affair. He writes in Indian Struggle, "In March, 1939, at the annual session of the Congress, the writer who presided made a clear proposal that the Indian National Congress should immediately send an ultimatum to the British Government demanding Independence within six months and should simultaneously prepare for a national struggle. This proposal was opposed by the Gandhi Wing and by Nehru and was thrown out. Thus a situation arose in which though the writer was the President of the Congress, his lead was not accepted by that body. Moreover, it was seen that on every conceivable occasion, the Gandhi Wing was opposing the President with a view to making it impossible for him to function. A complete deadlock within the Congress was the result. There were two ways of removing this deadlock — either the Gandhi Wing should give up its obstructionist policy, or the President should submit to the Gandhi Wing. With a view to finding a possible compromise, direct negotiations between Mahatma Gandhi and the writer took place, but they proved to be abortive. Under the constitution of the Congress, the President was entitled to appoint the Executive (Working Committee) for the coming year, but it was clear that the Gandhi Wing would continue to obstruct, if the Executive was not appointed according to its choice. And the position of the Gandhi Wing within the Congress was such that determined obstruction on its part would render it virtually impossible for the President to function in an independent manner. The Gandhi Wing was determined neither to accept the lead of the writer, nor to allow him to control the machinery of the Congress, and it would tolerate him only as a puppet President. The

Gandhi Wing had, moreover, this tactical advantage that it was the only organized party within the Congress, acting under a centralized leadership. The Left Wing or radical elements in the Congress who were responsible for the writer's re-election as President in January, 1939, were numerically in a majority — but they were at a disadvantage, because they were not organised under one leadership, as the Gandhi Wing was."

Rabindranath Tagore was thoroughly aghast. He came out openly in support of Subhas Chandra Bose and expressed his anxiety for his health and wellbeing. Tagore wrote to Gandhi on March 29, "Some rude hands have deeply hurt Bengal with an ungracious persistence. Please apply without delay balm to the wound with your kind hands and prevent it from festering." On April 3 he wrote a letter to Subhas, "the whole country is waiting for you - if you lose this favourable chance through hesitation you will never get it back." He again sent a cable to Gandhi, "I earnestly appeal to you to arrange meeting immediately with Subhas and save situation from tragic disaster." In May 1939 Rabindranath wrote a historic letter to Subhas where he addressed Subhas as Deshnayak, leader of the Nation.



Rabindranath Tagore stood firmly with Subhas, entreating and pleading on his behalf with Gandhi. Rabindranath gave 'Deshnayak' title to Subhas and identified him as the best hope for the country



Subhas Bose resigned from Congress in April 1939 as he was suspended by CWC for 3 years under the directive of Gandhiji. Panth resolution prevented Subhas from discharging his presidential duties. Gandhiji started non-cooperation against Subhas Chandra Bose. Image courtesy Jayasree Facebook page

The Arrest, the Fast, the Escape Plan

In the Calcutta Corporation election Subhas and Forward Bloc entered into an agreement with Muslim League and won. Mr. Siddiqi of Muslim League became the Mayor. Subhas declared in a public meeting, that to cater to the golden opportunity of driving out British he was ready to enter into a pact with Congress, or Hindu Mahasabha or Muslim League. A lot has been said about Subhas based on this incident. Some have labeled him as an appeaser of communal elements among Muslims while others saw it as definite proof that Subhas was a secular leftist. Years later a great man, while explaining the move said that it was a tactic solely with the intention of gaining India's independence first by uniting all forces, rather than indulging in communal politics. **Nation comes first over ideology or politics.** That had been his motto throughout. We have no reason to disbelieve him. If situation so demanded he would not have batted an eyelid to sever the connection with Muslim League in a moment's notice, unlike today's secular politicians. Subhas had earlier met Savarkar on 22nd June, 1940. As per Uma Mukherjee, in her Two Great Indian revolutionaries, Savarkar had shown Subhas the letter of Rashbehari Bose who had requested Subhas to come to the East to strike the Empire with an army. Savarkar concurred with Rashbehari in

terms of a need to build an army and strike at the roots of British imperialism (Ami Subhas Bolchi - Shailesh De). A special session of the Bengal Provincial Conference was held in Dhaka on 25th and 26th of May, 1940. The direction of the Provincial Conference was struggle against Imperialism and forging unity. The rallying cry was 'All Power to the Indian people.'

Subhas also tried to contact the Axis powers - Germany, Italy and Japan, in 1939. He opened negotiations with Soviet Union. Negotiations with Japan was carried out with the help of Dr. Asit Mukherjee who was then working in the Consulate General of Calcutta. Dr. Mukherjee and his Greek wife Savitri Devi (who had embraced Hinduism), conveyed the message from Japanese Consulate in secrecy. Subhas sent Lala Shankarlal, General Secretary of the All India Forward Bloc, to Japan on a false passport, to establish direct contact with the rulers. Subhas's nephew Dwijen Bose made necessary arrangements for Shankarlal's trip to Japan. His other nephew Aurobindo also undertook similar tasks with utmost secrecy. Amiya Nath Bose was sent to England to provide a message to an emissary of the Soviet Union, at great personal risk (source: "My Uncle Netaji" by Dr. Asoke Nath Bose).

On July 3, 1940 Bose decided to observe Siraj-ud-Daulah day in memory of the last independent Nawab of Bengal who was defeated in the battle of Palashi in 1757. He also proposed a movement for the removal of the Holwell monument in the Dalhousie Square. The monument was a testimony by the British historians to the legend that British soldiers were allegedly killed by Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah in Calcutta in what is known as Black Hole of Calcutta. This issue was connected to the sentiments of the Bengalis, esp. the Muslims. Thousands of Muslim youths joined this movement spontaneously. Subhas was put in the prison on July 3 on the charge of writing a seditious article called "Day of Reckoning" under Defense of India rules. But the movement had forced British Government to dismantle the monument and remove it from public view. Subhas was to stay in the Presidency Jail for the next 6 months and his days as a free man in British India ended forever.

Subhas now came up with an idea. He realized that it would be foolishness for him to remain in the jail during the period of world war when he could go out of India and secure cooperation from the other countries who were at odds with Britain. To secure his release he started a hunger strike in the prison, challenging the Government. He said that he would do a "Prayopabeshan" or fast unto death if he was not released. Before commencing the fast he sent a letter to the Governor of Bengal on 26 November, 1940 referring to all the injustices perpetrated on him. To quote Subhas, "He (Subhas) then

explored the possibility of being released in a legal manner, but found that there was none, because the British Government was determined to keep him locked up, so long as the war lasted. Thereupon, he sent an ultimatum to the Government pointing out that there was no moral or legal justification for detaining him in jail and that if he was not released forthwith, he would fast unto death. He was determined to get out of prison, whether dead or alive." He described the letter as his political testament. He asked that his letter be carefully preserved in the archives of the Government, so that it would be available to those of his country men who would succeed the British Government in future. His letter read, "In this mortal world, everything perishes and will perish - but ideas, ideals and dreams do not. One individual may die for an idea - but that idea will, after his death, incarnate itself in a thousand lives. That is how the wheels of evolution moves on and the ideas, ideals and dreams of one generation are bequeathed to the next. No idea has ever fulfilled itself in this world except through an ordeal of suffering and sacrifice. What greater solace can there be than the feeling that one has lived and died for a principle? What higher satisfaction can a man possess than the knowledge that his spirit will beget kindred spirits to carry on his unfinished task? what better reward can a soul desire than the certainty that his message will be wafted over hills and dales and over the broad plains to every corner of his land and across the seas to the distant lands? What higher consummation can life attain than peaceful self-immolation at the altar of this Cause? Hence it is evident that nobody can lose through suffering and sacrifice."

He asked the Government not to interfere with his fast and refrain from force feeding and told them in clear terms that he would fast unto death unless he was released. About this incident Subhas writes, "The Government laughed at the ultimatum and did not reply. At the last moment, the Home Minister requested his brother, Sarat Chandra Bose, Leader of the Congress Party in the Provincial Parliament, to inform the writer that it was a mad project and that Government could do nothing. Late at night, he was visited in his prison-cell by his brother who conveyed the Minister's message to him and informed him, further, that the attitude of the Government was very hostile. The next morning the fast began as already announced. Seven days later, the authorities suddenly got frightened, lest the writer should die in prison. A secret conference of high officials was hurriedly held and it was decided to release him, with the intention of re-arresting him after a month or so, when his health improved." On 5 Dec, Subhas was released but put under house arrest. His health was in a bad state but the spirit was willing to soar for India's freedom. He was exploring ways to go outside India and now he had the opportunity. Subhas started planning actively and engaged with his trusted colleagues. Now began the greatest journey of his life - the perilous journey that

resulted in the assumption of the glorious title of "Netaji" and achieved the liberation of India.



Only Subhas had the foresight to see the opportunities offered by World War 2 to India. After resigning from congress, Subhas set to work tenaciously to build a new party, Forward Bloc by pulling together all his loyalists from different parts of India, toured India extensively and met Jinnah and Savarkar to build consensus. But Government sent him to prison in July 1940 and kept him interned until his great escape. The escape plan was formulated.

"Ideas will work out their own destiny, and we who are but clods of clay encasing sparks of the Divine Fire have only got to consecrate ourselves to these ideas"

Mission Decided

A Perilous Journey

Jodi Tor Daak Sune Keu Naa Aase, Tobe Ekla Chaalo Re (Tagore Song - If nobody else responds to your call carry the burden alone)

Years later a great man had said the following (From the book Oi Mahamanab Ase), "Dead Man took nothing from you, he gave and left his everything and worldly wealth and matter to you, he took away nothing, he kept nothing for himself, he did nothing for himself, he wanted nothing for himself or his personal aggrandizement and for power. He gave himself to India. He gave something to India and he effaced himself away. He has no rancour for Bapu (because Bapu got twice defeated) in his fight against him and was so rattled that he gave up his Congress membership and also started a whispering campaign (against your Dead Man). Your Dead Man has no rancour because Bapu at last turned a volte face and preached fighting for freedom and honour; and because hearing and becoming stimulated and emboldened by the radio exhortations of your dead man, he stoutly opposed partition and during the last fateful meeting he wept like a child before them and sobbed out praying against partition but he was overridden roughshod. Also, it has been kept a secret that your Dead Man went with Bapu's full blessings and concurrence of the inner committee."

Louis Fischer, in the course of his conversations with Gandhi asked him about Subhas Chandra Bose. Gandhi described Bose as a "patriot of patriots", but, "misguided".

Gandhi had earlier dismissed an appeal by Rabindranath Tagore to reconsider the decision to ban Subhas for three years from Congress Working Committee. "Bans cannot be lifted without their apologizing for indiscipline", was his exact quote. This was the treatment that he meted out to one, who not only called him the "Father of the Nation", but also asked for his "blessing and good wishes", "in this holy war for India's liberation."

Bose had already made up his mind to leave India and fight from outside. He knew that he won't be able to dislodge the British Government from within India as the Government would surely put him in jail. He had no organization of his own unlike Gandhi. His only weapon was his mass support and popularity. But that would not be

enough to fight a machinery like British Administration. He had to give them a mighty push and that could be done only if he could carry out an armed struggle at a scale much higher than what the revolutionaries could do. He knew the plans of Bagha Jatin and Rashbehari Bose in 1914 to incite mutiny in the barracks. He was of the opinion that the geopolitical situation had given him the unique opportunity to seek help from the enemies of the Britain to wage a war now. He had to somehow leave India. His original thought was to take the help from Russia. He had also toyed with the idea of seeking help of Japan, possibly because of the presence of Rashbehari there. He had earlier contacted the Kirti Kisan Party through Sardar Niranjan Singh Talib and Comrade Acchar Singh. However the arrest of Subhas had put a brake on the plan. On 5 December Subhas was transported in an ambulance to his home in Elgin Road. He was put up in his father's bedroom where he spent his time in prayer and meditation and read Gita daily. A ring of security was established by the Government. All his visitors were monitored and his correspondences were intercepted and read before being delivered. On Dec 16, Mian Akbar Shah had come from frontier to meet Subhas. Bose asked him to help to formulate his escape plan via Peshawar to Kabul. Bengal Volunteers jumped into action, esp. Major Satya Gupta and Satya Ranjan Bakshi worked tirelessly to chalk out a meticulous escape plan and logistics around it including money.

From his confinement in his house Subhas once again had reached out to the Mahatma. He offered unconditional cooperation with Mahatma's movement even though it was not on the issue of National Independence, and despite its "restricted scope and form." Mahatma replied on 29th December 1940, "You are irrepressible whether ill or well. Do get well before going in for fireworks." He added that, "With the fundamental differences between you and me, it is not possible till one of us is converted to the other's view, we must sail in different boats, though their destination may appear, but only appear to be the same."

Amare bandhbi tora, Se bandhan ki toder aache? (Tagore Song - Do you possess the shackles for capturing me?)

Subhas Bose was last seen in his house on 16 January 1941. It is now said that in the dead of the night, he dressed up as a one Md. Zia-ud-din, an insurance agent, left his Elgin road house in a car with the help of his nephews, in particular Dr. Sisir Bose who had driven the car and traveled to Bararee in Bihar where he was rested in another of his nephew, Dr. Asoke Nath Bose's house. From the memoirs of Dr. Asoke Nath Bose, it appears that Subhas chose Sisir for driving him as he was not involved in any prior political activities and was an efficient driver. Sisir had already made a sortie to know

the routes. Sarat Bose was completely aware of the plan and two other nephews Dwijendra and Aurobindo and niece Ila who had earlier nursed him, were also engaged in helping in executing the plan. In all his correspondences he had mentioned that he would be put in jail by the police. He also had to deceive his family members since his houses in Elgin Road and Woodburn Park were surrounded by police and spies. On 17 January, 1941, at around 1.30 AM, Bose bade his final good bye and proceeded by car to Gomoh.

Subhas himself writes about his "mahabhinishkraman" or the great escape, "After his release, the writer was at home for about forty days and did not leave his bedroom. During this period, he surveyed the whole war-situation and came to the conclusion that Indian freedom-fighters should have first-hand information as to what was happening abroad and should join the fight against Britain and thereby contribute to the break-up of the British Empire. After considering the different means whereby this could be done, he found no other alternative but to travel abroad himself. Towards the end of January, 1941, he quietly left his home one night at a late hour. Though he was always closely watched by the Secret Police, he managed to dodge them and after an adventurous journey, managed to cross the Indian frontier. It was the biggest political sensation that had happened in India for a long time."

Md. Zia-ud-Din was treated as a visitor in Asoke Nath's house in order to deceive the servants. Late at night Sisir, Asoke and his wife set out in Sisir's wanderer car and they picked up Mohd. Zia-ud-Din from the roadside and dropped him in the Gomoh Station from where Zia-ud-Din boarded the Delhi Kalka Mail. The train reached Peshawar cantonment on 19th January. Mian Akbar Shah led the Muslim Insurance agent to a Tonga which took him to the Taj Mahal Hotel. He stayed for sometime in the house of Abad Khan and then transformed himself to a deaf mute Pathan (since he didn't speak Pushtu, the local dialect). Mian Akbar had chosen Bhagat Ram Talwar as the escort to Kabul. Bhagat Ram would be taking his elder relative Zia-ud-Din to Adda Sharif for a possible miracle to cure him.

In the meanwhile the date of next hearing for Subhas's case was fixed on Jan 27. Jan 26 was celebrated across India as Congress had taken a pledge of Purna Swaraj on the same day in 1930. On January 26, 1941, Subhas and his associate Bhagat Ram had formally crossed the border of the British Indian empire and was travelling along the rugged and dangerous terrains of tribal lands beyond the North West Frontier. Subhas's disappearance, when discovered, naturally caused a sensation like never before. British intelligence was embarrassed. News hit the headlines across India. Rabindranath Tagore wrote, "Deeply concerned over Subhas's disappearance." The

police swooped down on the house and interrogated the family members. But Prabhavati Devi turned the table on them when she demanded angrily what had they done with her son, to which the police had no answer. A clever story was concocted by some that Subhas had renounced the world, which the police obviously did not believe. The search continued but no trace of Subhas was found. Viceroy Linlithgow was enraged with Governor Herbert who had suggested that it was not a bad development at all if the no. 1 enemy of British Government had left India. Janvrin, the deputy commissioner of police in Calcutta guessed that Subhas had gone abroad to seek help for his country's freedom.

On the political arena at this time Gandhi was carrying on an individual civil disobedience which did not resonate with his countrymen. In Subhas's own words, "During the year 1941, the Civil Disobedience Movement continued — but without much enthusiasm on the part of Gandhi and his followers. The Mahatma had calculated that by following a mild policy, he would ultimately open the door towards a compromise — but in this, he was disappointed. His goodness was mistaken for weakness and the British Government went on exploiting India for war-purposes to the best of its ability. The Government also exploited to the fullest extent such agents, as the erstwhile Communist leader, M. N. Roy, who were prepared to sell themselves to Britain." Government was exploiting India for the war purpose and in this attempt they were helped by the Communists. Jawaharlal Nehru, who did not have the guts to oppose Gandhiji was also a reluctant participant in the individual civil disobedience movement. Gandhi himself had mentioned, "Pandit Jawaharlal has agreed to abide by all the conditions imposed by me. It was only when he agreed and conveyed his acceptance that I allowed him to be the second Satyagrahi."

In the meanwhile Bhagat Ram Talwar aka Rahamat Khan and his uncle Zia-ud-Din aka Subhas Bose had traveled to Kabul. This journey of 200 miles was extremely arduous and often made on foot, often devoid of any proper food and rest. In Kabul he had to wait for an indefinite period. They had at first taken up accommodation in a dingy sarai near the Lahori Gate upon reaching Kabul on 31st January. At first Rahamat Khan tried to establish contacts with the Soviet ambassador but it proved futile. Subhas Chandra Bose had been keen on seeking help from Russia because Russia and Germany had signed a non-aggression pact - Molotov Ribbentrop pact in 1939, and both were common enemies of Britain and also because he believed that Russia could sympathize with the India's armed struggle for independence. Bhagat Ram could not achieve any breakthrough in the first week. Getting impatient by the delays, Subhas himself went to the German Embassy and met Hans Pilger, the German minister in Kabul. Pilger

advised Bose to "keep himself hidden amongst the Indian friends in the bazaar", and contacted the Russian Ambassador on Bose's behalf. The Russian Envoy had suspected that there was a hidden British plot in Bose's wish to travel through Russia. This suspicion might have been planted by the Communist Party of India who by then had become active British agents and were not exactly friends of Subhas. Pilger wanted Berlin to take the matter up with Moscow and informed German foreign ministry in Berlin. Contact was established with the Italian Embassy. Prof. Sugato Bose writes, that in Berlin, the Italian consulate had spoken with Ernst Woermann of German foreign ministry offering Italy's help to facilitate Bose's journey to Berlin via Russia. German ministry asked the Italian Ambassador to get in charge with Count Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow. Until clearance was obtained at the highest level from Berlin and Moscow, Subhas was to stay in touch with Germans in Kabul through Herr Thomas of Siemens Company.

In the meanwhile, the life in the serai was becoming dangerous as they did not have any passport or other documents. An Afghan policeman who had become suspicious was after them and he had to be bribed, first by giving Rs 10, and then by giving up the gold wristwatch of Subhas Bose, which was a gift from his father. Bose had also suffered from illness while living in that extremely unhealthy environment and had to be quickly accommodated in some better place. In the second week of February, Bhagat Ram sought out Uttamchand Malhotra, who ran a shop of repairing radios in the Indian neighbourhood. Uttamchand had provided shelter to Bose, but a prying neighbour had almost ruined the plan as he discovered the presence of Bose. Bose was temporarily shifted out but brought in again for rest and to recuperate from his ill health. Subhas was now getting desperate. At this moment a signal came from Herr Thomas that Bose should meet the Italian Ambassador Pietro Quaroni. Bose and Bhagat Ram arrived in the Italian embassy on the afternoon of 22nd February 1941. According to Prof. Bose, Quaroni was deeply impressed by Subhas Bose and considered him to be "intelligent, able, full of passion, and without doubt the most realistic, the only realist among Indian nationalist leaders." They met several times over the next few weeks and discussed possible alternatives for Bose to travel out of Afghanistan. Subhas in the meanwhile had written two articles - "Gandhism in the light of Hegelian Dialectic" and "A message to My Countrymen" for passing on to Calcutta through Bhagat Ram.

The great escape, in the own words of Subhas as narrated to Uttamchand Malhotra is provided this section.

Subhas Chandra Bose's escape from Calcutta - Reminiscences of Uttamchand Malhotra

According to the memoirs of Uttamchand Malhotra, who gave refuge to Subhas in Kabul, Uttamchand met Subhas through Rahamat Khan aka Bhagatram, in February 1941, near the banks of the Kabul river. Subhas as Ziauddin, and Bhagatram, were staying in a sarai or an inn in the Lahori Darwaza area. The sarai was filthy and the food was bad. Moreover a CID man of the Afghan police has started shadowing them and also extracted money. He even took the wrist watch of Subhas which his father gave to him. While Rahamat went to bring the luggage from the sarai, Subhas narrated his story to Uttamchand. He said that he left Peshawar on 19th January and reached Kabul in 3 days. On 15 of January, 1941, Subhas set out of his house at midnight in the guise of a Maulvi, got into a car and caught the mail from a station 40 miles away from Calcutta. He reached Peshawar at 9 PM on 17th January. An already waiting car drove him to the appointed place. On January 19, he drove out of Peshawar en route to Jamrud. He stayed the night in a little village called Gurhi. The next day, he and Rahamat Khan started on foot to Kabul. From Gurhi he pretended that he was deaf and dumb. Next morning they crossed the Indian border and spent the night in the famous shrine of the Addah Sharif as the guests of the Pir. They reached Lalpura in the evening and were guests of a very influential Khan of the place. They left Lalpura with a very important letter of introduction from the Chief. The letter mentioned that they were going on a pilgrimage to the Sukhi Saheb's shrine and they should not be harassed as they were inhabitants of the tribal area. After a few miles from Lalpura they reached the Kabul river. They had to avoid the usual road between Dukka and Peshawar as on this road passports were checked at three places. They caught a lorry with great difficulty. Snow was falling and they had no warm clothes. They had to sit on the top of the lorry. The next day they reached Butkhak. Their passports were checked and Rahamat Khan produced the Lalpura Khan's certificate. After taking tea they got into the lorry and reached Kabul between 4 PM and 5 PM in the afternoon.

It is to be noted that there are certain differences in what Uttamchand had reported as Netaji's version of the great escape and what Netaji's nephews had written much later. But it is likely that Subhas Bose did not disclose all the details of his escape to Uttamchand as he knew that there was a strong possibility that Uttamchand would be caught and then whoever were involved in the great escape, would be in danger. So he kept his story vague and broad and deliberately missed the details. There are also differences in dates. That is again because of the same reason, to ensure safety of the helpers, as they would have good alibi on any other dates other than the date on which

he actually escaped. So British police would not be able to track down those who had helped him.

On February 27, 1941, the British had intercepted and decoded an Italian telegram that suggested that Bose might be in Kabul. The British Special Operations group had informed their representatives in the middle East that Bose was to travel from Afghanistan to Germany via Iran, Iraq and Turkey. Irish historian Prof Eunan O' Halpin of Trinity College Dublin had made a sensational claim quoting from British intelligence documents declassified in 2004, **that Britain actually ordered the assassination of Bose on March 7, 1941 to its operatives in the Middle East.**

The dynamics of international political relationship was taking shape rapidly. On March 3, Count Schulenburg had cabled Berlin from Moscow informing that Russia was ready to give Subhas Bose the transit visa to travel to Germany. On March 10, Mrs. Quaroni, the Russian wife of the Italian Ambassador herself came to Uttamchand's shop with a message for Subhas to get photographed. That photograph would find its place in the passport of an Italian diplomat Orlando Mazzotta. Bose handed over his political thesis addressed to his countrymen "from somewhere in Europe" and a letter addressed to his brother Sarat, to Bhagat Ram for handing over personally. According to the memoirs of Uttamchand Malhotra, Subhas Chandra Bose was to leave Kabul on March 18 and had to reach the house of Signora Quaroni by March 17 in order to do so. He set off from Kabul by a car along with two Germans and one Italian, traveled through the mountainous passes of Hindu Kush range and reached Samarkand. From there he and his companions boarded a train to Moscow. On 31st March Bose reached Moscow and on 2nd April he reached Berlin. One of the Germans who had accompanied Bose was called Dr. Weller who had escorted him to Berlin. As per Uttamchand, Bose had reached Moscow on March 27, stayed there for a night and reached Berlin by air on 28th March.

Before we continue on Bose's journey it will be interesting to know something about Rahamat Khan, aka Bhagat Ram Talwar. In his book Indian Spy, Mihir Bose writes that Bhagat Ram, a communist, whose brother Harikishen was hanged by the British Government in Lahore, actually worked for the British once Russia joined the allied camp. He was code named as Silver. He acted as a spy for the Italians, the Germans and the Russians and also briefly for the Japanese. He was therefore the only quintuple agent in the second world war. Bhagat Ram took a lot of money from the Axis powers, particularly Italy and Germany. Germans awarded him the iron cross for his service to the Reich. Bhagat Ram's contribution in the second world war is extremely nebulous.

But it is true that he helped Subhas during the most critical moments which shaped the history of India to a large extent.

After Subhas found his way to safety, Bhagat Ram went to Lahore to meet acting President of Forward Bloc Shardul Singh Kavishwar and provided him the letter of Subhas. He then went to Calcutta to meet Sarat Bose and gave him the articles and the message of Subhas. He also met the revolutionaries of Bengal Volunteers for acting on Subhas's plan of fomenting a rebellion with the tribal leaders in the North West. For this he got unstinting support and help from the Italian Embassy. Shantimoy Ganguli of Bengal Volunteers had gone with him to Kabul for meeting the tribal leaders and they all agreed to help. But the plan could not materialize. Kirti Kishan Party backed out of the plan since Germany had invaded Russia. But the next developments were unexpected. All the Bengal Volunteer revolutionaries including Shantimoy, Satya Ranjan Bakshi, Jyotish Guha among the stalwarts were arrested by British Police. Uttamchand was caught and was expelled from Kabul. Only exception was Bhagat Ram. He was never caught. And the reason is now crystal clear. Only Bhagat Ram knew the B.V leaders, he knew of the entire plan of organizing a rebellion with the tribal leaders, he knew about Uttamchand. Everybody who was involved with him was caught and British came to know of the entire plan. This can only be explained in the light of the activities of Silver - a trusted British spy who betrayed the revolutionaries and their activities for the sake of his narrow, dogmatic political belief. And nobody knew about his betrayal until recently when the classified intelligence documents were available. As an aftereffect Satya Ranjan Bakshi and Jyotish Guha were tortured by the British military in Red fort. Jyotish died and Satya Bakshi emerged from the ordeal as a broken man.



Subhas Chandra Bose left Calcutta in the dead of night on 17th Jan with the help of his nephew Sisir Bose who drove him to Bararee, the house of Dr. Asokenath Bose. He caught the Delhi Kalka mail from Gomoh station on the night of 18th January. Later Bose as Md Zia ud Din, traveled to Peshawar. In Peshawar Cantt he met Mian Akbar Shah who connected him to Bhagat Ram Talwar. Bose had enacted one of the most thrilling escape stories.



Bhagat Ram Talwar, aka Rahamat Khan, aka Silver was a Communist agent and a master spy who helped Bose or Md. Zia ud Din to leave India via NWFP and Kabul. It was through Rahamat's help and guidance Bose could travel from Peshawar to Kabul largely by foot and

finally sought refuge with Italian and German Embassies. It is alleged that Bhagat Ram later betrayed the cause of Netaji when Germany declared war on Soviet Russia



Subhas Chandra Bose left Kabul as Orlando Mazzotta, an Italian Diplomat, by the help of Italian ambassador Pietro Quaroni. Bose was already known to Mussolini. Bose traveled to Berlin as Mazzotta and remained there with the same name until his revealing of his own identity to the world through a radio broadcast in Feb 1942

Bose in Germany: collaboration with Foreign Office

In the meanwhile, Subhas Chandra Bose was being looked after by the German Foreign Office under Dr. Adam Von Trott, assisted by Dr. Alexander Werth. Adam Von Trott was not a Nazi. In fact, he was involved later in the conspiracy of assassinating Hitler in 1944. Von Trott helped Bose in getting a rank and position and also sheltered him from the hard liner Nazis. He was well aware of India and her problems, unlike Hitler who was in favour of forging solidarity among the Nordic races and possessed a biased view about Indians, coloured by racial prejudice. Bose had his initial headquarter established

in Hotel Excelsior. Subhas Bose's plan of action in Kabul had been to initiate a revolution by establishing a Government of Free India in Europe and largescale sabotage activities by the Indian revolutionaries to impede Britain's war effort. He had discussed with Quaroni about this plan. This had resonated well with the "Operation Tiger", Germany's plan to foment a rebellion in Kabul and thus unsettle British rule in India.

On April 9, Bose sent a detailed report to the German Government with a vision of the work required to be done in Europe, Afghanistan, Tribal territories and India. He also outlined the geopolitical activities that are needed in order to effectively work out the plan - for instance the material support from Japan in the last stages, destruction of Singapore base of Britain, agreement between Soviet Union and Japan and a settlement with China to enable Japan to move against Britain in South East Asia. His meeting with Ribbentrop on April 29 in the Imperial Hotel in Vienna was a disappointment. German Government informed him that his plan could not be accepted as yet. Bose wanted the Indian prisoners of wars captured by Rommel's force in the North Africa to be organized into an effective fighting machinery against the British. But Ribbentrop declined to act on the same and refused to give a statement in favour of Indian independence.

On 3rd May, Bose submitted a supplementary memorandum in which he had asked the Axis powers to clearly declare their policy regarding the freedom of India and the Middle Eastern countries like Iraq. He favoured opening up of a channel between Germany and India through Russia and Afghanistan. He had thought of a possible invasion of an Indian Legion from the North West, with the active help and support of the tribal leaders in that belt. Subhas had demanded an unequivocal recognition of India's right to independence by the Axis powers. However German and Italian Government put up a lame excuse that India was supposed to be within Russian sphere of influence and therefore they could not come up with a statement regarding her future. The works proposed to be done by him were - Setting up of a propaganda mechanism in the form of a Free India radio station, that would broadcast to the Indian people for rising against the British, establishing a Free India Government, Legations of the Free India Government to be established in friendly countries, and an Indian Legion consisting of the prisoners of wars of Indian origin to be set up for the purpose of marching into India at the head of the Axis forces to wrest control from British Army. The necessary finance for all the work mentioned above was to be provided by the Axis Powers in the form of loan to the Free India government in Europe with clear understanding that it would be repaid in full when an independent Government is set up in India.

Bose had opined in his memorandum that in order for his plan to be successful, it was desirable that the status quo between Germany and Soviet Union was maintained. He was on a visit to Rome when he received the news that on June 22, 1941, Operation Barbarossa had been launched. This was a bolt from the blue as this action severely dented his own plan. Bose did some plain speaking to the German Foreign Office. He warned Ribbentrop that the "march of the German troops towards the East will be regarded as the approach not of a friend, but of an enemy." Even though the higher echelons of the German Government realized the material value of Bose's memorandum, it took them long time to understand its strategic importance and to galvanize it into action. Hitler had allowed setting up of a Free India Centre. Germany also allowed Bose to raise a Legion from the Indian soldiers captured as PoW. German Government cooperated by establishing a special Department, India that helped Bose in realizing his objectives.

In April 1941 Bose had asked his erstwhile secretary Fraulein Emilie Schenkl to join his work in Berlin. He had also gathered around him Indian students and professionals who had the urge to work for India's freedom. They included A.C.N Nambiar, Abid Hasan Safrani who was to become his secretary and a fellow traveler to the far East, N.G Swami, who was to head his secret service, N.G. Ganpuley, Pramode Sengupta, Habibur Rahman, M.R Vyas, and Girija Mukherjee. Nambiar was an old friend who he had met in 1933. He had relocated to Prague and had helped in cementing the Indo Czech ties. He was in France when Bose tracked him down. In January 1942, Nambiar came to Berlin and took over the Free India Center as Bose's deputy. This circle of Indians, Bose's close aides in Germany, interacted with the Special India group of German foreign Office under Legationsrat Adam Von Trott zu Solz and his colleagues Alexander Werth and F.J Furtwaengler. They shielded the Indians from the Nazi Government officials and party leaders.

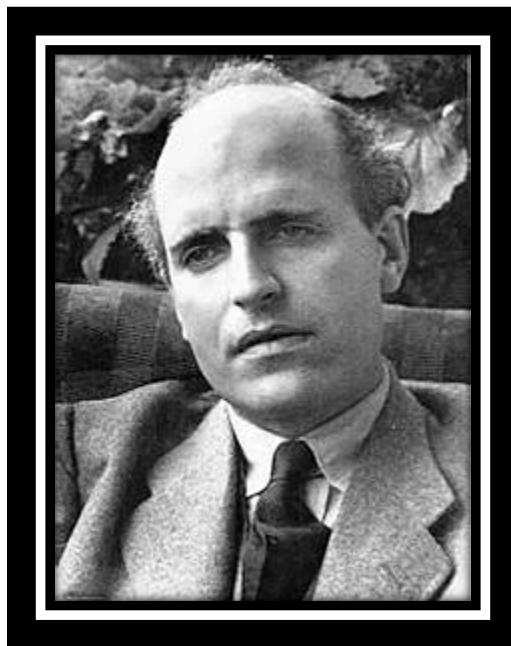
It was in Germany that Bose was offered the coveted title of Netaji by the soldiers whom he personally and passionately called for fighting against the British. Dr. R. C Majumdar in his History of Freedom Movement of India writes about Bose's effort to mobilize support among Indian PoW. "Bose proposed to raise an Indian legion of three Infantry Battalions and a Company of Irregulars which would form part of the German Fifth Column Organization. He was confident of German victory and visualized the triumphal progress of German army across Russia to Central Asia, when his own legions accompanying it would invade India; he hoped that the Indian soldiers of the British Government would fraternize with them and turn against their own masters. Buoyed up with these ideas Bose asked for all Indian prisoners of war in North Africa to be brought

to Germany at once. But at first disappointment awaited him. Although British officers and other loyalist influences among the prisoners had been removed, the Indian soldiers showed marked hostility to Bose when he visited their camp, and his speech was interrupted. Bose persisted in his endeavour, but changed his plan. He privately interviewed individual prisoners and made such a good impression upon them that recruits began to pour in steadily and two units were formed in January, 1942." Writes Rudolf Hartog, who was an interpreter in the Indian Legion, in his book "The Sign of the Tiger", Bose with the help of Foreign Office, "set up the extensive propaganda broadcasts to India over the strongest shortwave stations available. These broadcasts were transmitted daily in several Indian language from Hilversum in Netherlands and Podiebrad (Czechoslovakia) short wave transmitters. It was the foreign office that provided the money to finance these activities - according to an estimate one million Reichmarks for the broadcasts alone - as well as the expenses of both Bose and his staff at the "Free India centre". All these very extensive activities were only based on agreements between Bose and the foreign office, with the compliance of the German High Command. There was never a special order from Hitler, although the Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop did inform him."

The German Government's attitude towards the usefulness of Bose as a possible ally had changed by 1942. After waging war against Russia, Hitler was free of the obligation of including India under Russian sphere of influence and therefore turned his attention to a possible invasion of India, esp. with Erwin Rommel's triumphant march in North Africa. Thus Bose, as the leader of the Free India Centre, began to get the status of the world leader, with an army under his command and having resources to mobilize for the Axis forces in the war effort.



Subhas Chandra Bose in Germany with the staff officers of the India Office, a part of Ribbentrop's foreign office in Berlin, Germany



Adam von Trott zu Solz was one of the German officers very close to Bose. Adam von Trott was not pro-Nazi. He was executed in 1944 in charges of attempting to assassinate Hitler by count Stauffenberg. His brother was part of the Indische Legion



Bose's address in Berlin. Bose had been given a Free India Centre and a radio to broadcast his messages. He was also later allowed to raise an army from the Indian PoW and he met the leaders of the Axis power. But Germany could not support his plan of attacking India from Afghanistan, owing to war situation in Russia. Bose had a less than fruitful meeting with Hitler on 29th May, 1942. He met the Japanese military attaché and drew up plans for moving to the Far East

“Let us create history. Let somebody else write it”

Netaji, the World Leader

Glimpses of the Second World War

It is now imperative for us to get a quick overview of the 2nd world war at this stage. The world war 2 was supposed to begin on 1st of September 1939 with the German invasion of Poland, but its seed was sown with the humiliating treaty of Versailles in 1919. Germany had annexed Sudetenland, remilitarized Rhineland, occupied Saarland and annexed Austria by 1938. Italy had invaded Abyssinia in 1935 and Japan had invaded China in the same year. Munich agreement with Britain gave a free hand to Hitler to continue his aggression into Czechoslovakia. The real war had begun when Hitler invaded Poland after his demand for annexation of Danzig, and signed a non aggression pact with Soviet which effectively ensured a division of Poland between Germany and Russia. United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, France, Britain and South Africa declared war with the Axis forces. Germany, Soviet Union and Italy worked out their spheres of influence. Wehrmacht reached Warsaw by Sep 8. Soviet Union had annexed the Baltic countries by 1940. Germany invaded Denmark and Norway in April 1940 to protect the shipment of iron ore from Sweden. Germany then advanced to occupy France. Circumventing the invincible Maginot Line, German Blitzkrieg proceeded through Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg. Wehrmacht proceeded to the channel and cut off the allied forces at the coastline. Britain had to get its soldiers out through Dunkirk by mobilizing all its Naval resources. In June 1940 Italy invaded France and Paris soon fell to the advancing Wehrmacht. France was divided between Germany and Italy and an independent portion remained with Vichy as an ally of the Axis powers. In July 1940 the battle of Britain had begun whereby the Luftwaffe of Goering had invaded the skies of Britain. However Royal Air Force was able to resist the Blitz and by May 1941 the plan to invade Britain was dropped. In the meanwhile German U Boats had secured major victory in the waters, but Germany suffered a set back when its warship Bismarck was sunk in the Atlantic. After September 1940 Japan, Italy and Germany had signed the Tripartite Pact which formally united them as the Axis power. Hungary, Slovakia and Romania joined the Axis by November. On October 1940 Italy invaded Greece and suffered reversals until Germany came to their aid in 1941 thus completing their conquest of the Balkans. By 1941 Italy was also on the verge of losing their holds in Egypt and East Africa to Britain. By March 1941 Erwin Rommel's 'Afrika Corps' and Panzer divisions had advanced deep inside North Africa. Bitter war broke out in Yugoslavia with the partisans.

Soviet Japan neutrality pact had been signed in April 1941. In June 1941 Hitler invaded Soviet Russia in his operation Barbarossa, in what would be a very costly mistake of Germany. Like Napoleon, Hitler too went down with his Russian invasion. Subhas had analyzed that Hitler had been cozying up to the British for a long time. He disliked British imperialism, but he liked the Aryan race of Britain. That was the reason why he let go the three hundred thousand British troops in Dunkirk, despite having every opportunity to crush them and thus ending the war. He even secretly sent Rudolf Hess to negotiate a peace agreement with Churchill prior to Barbarossa, so that he could concentrate on the inferior 'Russies'. When Churchill had seen through his plan and got Hess into captivity, Hitler disowned Hess. It was no wonder that despite the best attempts of Netaji, Hitler was loathe to accord the status of independence to India, although Mussolini had agreed to the proposal for the formation of a provisional Government of free India in Europe.

In the Pacific theater Japan had been progressing rapidly as the rising Asian power. Japan continued its aggression against the Chinese Nationalists led by Chiang Kai Shek and the Communists. Under the leadership of Hideki Tojo, Japan invaded Indo China and decided to rapidly seize the European colonies in East and South East Asia. By December 1941, Japan had attacked Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, Hong Kong and brought America into the war by launching an aerial attack on the Pearl Harbour.

On 1st January 1942 the Atlantic charter was signed by the allied powers, that formally brought England, US and Soviet Russia together. By April 1942 Japan looked invincible as it sought to end the European colonies in Pacific. Together with Thailand it had invaded and conquered Burma, Malaya, Dutch East Indies and Singapore, inflicting heavy damage on the allied forces and taking many prisoners, including soldiers of British Indian army. Singapore fell on 15 February 1942 to Japan and Subhas made his first open broadcast on 19 February, 1942. The voice, reverberated over the radio waves, generated a tremendous impact on his fellow countrymen, "This is Subhas Chandra Bose speaking to you over Azad Hind radio."



Bose took to Berlin Radio to carry out the broadcasts to the people in India in various regional languages. Extensive propaganda was needed to keep the morale up back home, connect to the revolutionaries and Congress leaders to encourage them to carry on the fight against the British and to instill a sense of purpose and determination in the people to carry on the war against Imperialism. Germany invested heavily to help establish the radio stations for Bose, set up and run the Free India Centre and the Indische Legion. Bose repaid the German debt when he was able to raise enough resources in the South East Asia

"Free India" activities in Germany

While the geopolitical activities were shaping up, Subhas Chandra Bose was busy in giving shape to his plan. Indien-Büro (India Office) which later became the Zentralstelle Freies Indien (Central Office Free India) became his operational Head Quarter. Its primary goal was to spread information on India's independence struggle. It published a regular news magazine Azad Hind and also established broadcasting facilities to India. Although the German Government never recognized Bose's office as the Government in Exile, the office practically functioned as an embassy with German counterparts in the Foreign Office. Adam von Trott zu Solz headed the Sonderreferat Indien (Special Department for India). The Indische Legion was created. Bose had visited Rome in May 1941 via France. He reached Rome on 14th June and received a grand reception befitting the Head of a State. Mussolini received him personally on the following day. Even though the Italian Foreign Minister Count Galeazzo Ciano, the son-

in-law of Mussolini, did not like Bose's preference to be closer to the Germans, Mussolini, having met Bose thrice during the period of his exile in Europe in 1933-36 and being aware of his revolutionary ideas, was open and friendly towards him. After his return from Rome and Vienna in July 1941, Bose lived, along with Emilie, in a mansion at Sophienstrasse 7 in the Charlottenburg neighborhood of Berlin.

Swami and a band of young men received special training as members of an elite commando force. Rudolf Hartog, who served as an interpreter for Hindustani in the India League, writes about the structure, the training, the difficulties and above all about Bose's concept of a future Indian society, where religious, linguistic, caste and regional groups would be one. The unit recruited itself from Indian students in Germany and Austria and from Indian prisoners of war caught at the North African Front. They were part of the Wehrmacht (the Armed Forces) and wore German style uniforms, but with a flash on the left sleeve showing a springing tiger and Freies Indien Tricolour. Sikh soldiers and officers wore turbans. Walter Harbich was the commander in charge of the training camp and he implemented Bose's plan to unite members across religious, caste and linguistic barriers. The recruitment into the Indische Legion began by December 1941. Bose persuaded them to join the cause of their motherland by reminding them that their oath and allegiance should be to their motherland India and not to the British Government. Subhas Bose's power of persuasion worked miracles and around four thousand soldiers captured by Germany and Italy had joined with him. Zentralstelle Freies Indien was formally opened in November 1941 in Berlin. "Jai Hind", which was originally coined by Chempakaraman Pillai in 1907 and later adopted by Abid Hasan, became the national greeting among the soldiers. Jana Gana Mana, the Tagore's immortal song eulogizing the Indian civilization, was adopted as the National anthem. Subhas's plans of revolutionary activities were compromised owing to the betrayal of Bhagat Ram as mentioned earlier. But he could communicate with Sarat Bose through wireless messages from Berlin to Tokyo that were delivered by the Japanese consulate to Sarat. The British intercepted a message from Japanese foreign ministry to his Ambassador in Berlin, that contained one of Subhas's communications with Sarat. Sarat had been instrumental in forming a new Government in Bengal by allying with Fazlul Haq of Krishak Praja Party and he was supposed to be its home minister. In December 1941, he was arrested and detained by British Government. Gandhiji, emboldened by the reversals that Britain suffered in the hands of Japan, was preparing for a final showdown with Britain in early 1942.

In the meanwhile Japanese Ambassador in Berlin Lt. General Oshima Hiroshi and Col. Yamamoto held several meetings with Subhas in Berlin.

Cripps Mission - India gears up for the final revolution

Churchill was under pressure from Franklin D Roosevelt to enter into a favourable agreement with Indian Nationalist leaders. Viceroy Lord Linlithgow was opposed to any conciliation. A reluctant Churchill had sent Stafford Cripps on a mission to India. Cripps belonged to Labour Party and was sent to negotiate a wartime agreement with the Congress and Muslim League. Cripps began by offering India Dominion Status at the end of the war, with chance to secede from the Commonwealth and go for total independence. Cripps also promised privately to get rid of Linlithgow and grant the Dominion Status with immediate effect. However, in public he had little to offer. There was little trust between the British and Congress by this stage, and both sides felt that the other was concealing its true plans. The Congress stopped talks with Cripps and, guided by Gandhi, the national leadership demanded immediate self-government in return for war support. Gandhi said that Cripps's offer of Dominion Status after the war was a "post-dated cheque drawn on a failing bank" (source: Wikipedia). Jinnah also rejected Cripps's proposals as it did not contain any explicit offer on Pakistan and he felt that the Muslim right to self-determination was ignored. The Viceroy Linlithgow and the Secretary of state for India, Amery had also worked in the background to sabotage the mission. Sri Aurobindo was one person who had expressed a positive approval of the Cripps's proposal in his private letter on March 31, 1942. He also sent a personal message to Congress to urge them to accept Cripps's proposals. Gandhiji rejected the advice. Possibly Sri Aurobindo, as a prophet of humanity, was trying to avoid the violence and bloodshed associated with Partition which he might have foreseen.

Subhas writes in the Indian Struggle, "The desire of the British Government for a compromise with the Congress was reciprocated by the Gandhi Wing. The Congress Working Committee, meeting at Wardha on the 16th January, 1942, passed a resolution offering co-operation in the war-effort once again. Soon after — that is, in February, 1942, at the instance of the British Government, Marshal Chiang Kai Shek visited India with a view to inducing the Congress leaders to come to an understanding with the British Government. Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in India in March, 1942, under auspicious circumstances. In view of the rapid and brilliant success of the Japanese forces, the British Government was in a chastened mood and Cripps was regarded by the general public as the right man for the right job. But his efforts, nevertheless, failed, because all that he had brought with him, was a promise of Dominion Status after the war ended. Coupled with this promise, was the threat that India would probably be divided, when the war was over. On April 10, the Congress Working Committee rejected the Cripps proposals on the ground that they in no way met India's demand for freedom.

Sir Stafford Cripps made his farewell broadcast to the Indian people on the 11th April and then left India a disappointed man."

International support for India's effort to get freedom: The anti Subhas propaganda of British media

In Germany, declaration for India's freedom seemed to be on anvil and the draft declaration of the Foreign Office in Berlin contained many of Bose's demands. It started with, "Germany, Italy and Japan are convinced that the Indian nation will break the political and economic bonds of British Imperialism and then as master of its own fate will carry out a sweeping transformation of its national life..." (His Majesty's Opponent - Prof. Sugato Bose).

However there were problems galore in the relationship between Japan and Germany and it resulted in lost opportunities for Subhas Bose. This pertained to Japan's unilateral plans in the Pacific theater, its relationship with Soviet Union and other war strategies. Ribbentrop therefore turned down Bose's plan of travelling to Asia in 1942. Precious moments were lost. Bose even thought that he and the Indian cause were being used as a bargaining chip for a possible German compromise with the British. Bose therefore focused on the propaganda war with the aid of Berlin Azad Hind radio. On 10th November 1941, Eric Conran Smith, secretary of the Home Department of the government of India had told the Indian Council of State, that Bose had „gone over to the enemy" and signed a pact with the Axis designed to lead to the invasion of India. This was the start of a tremendous propaganda offensive against Bose. The British press, which had so far been speculating in which ashram he was, and how he had escaped, now latched on to the notion of Bose "the Quisling". The Daily Mail, with a photograph of Bose under the caption "Indian turns traitor", announced, "Indian Quisling No 1 flees to Hitler". The Daily Express carried a photograph of Bose in a long overcoat and Gandhi cap talking to a German guard at a Berlin zoo in 1934, and the heading: "Indian leader plans invasion 5th Column". In India the Anglophilic newspapers like the Statesman and the Englishman carried out the assault on Subhas Bose and Communist Party of India joined the league of Subhas haters. On 24th March, 1942, British News Agency Reuters had reported that Subhas Chandra Bose was killed in an air crash on his way to attend a conference in Tokyo. Gandhi sent a condolence message to Prabhavati Devi. Subhas then made a radio broadcast on March 25 - "My death is perhaps an instance of wishful thinking." Bose also asked the Indian people to reject the offer of Dominion Status of Cripps.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had said that Bose's escape to Germany had made a great impression on Gandhiji. He admired the courage and resourcefulness possessed by Subhas.

Japanese Premier Hideki Tojo had openly declared "India for the Indians." Japanese had sent a draft declaration to the other Axis powers proposing freedom for India and Arab. On April 16, Ribbentrop produced an amended version and presented to Hitler. But Hitler rejected the declaration. He also urged the Italians not to accept the same. On May 5, Bose went to Italy to meet the Duce to reverse the Salzburg decision of Hitler and Mussolini on April 29. Ciano reported that Mussolini was persuaded by Bose to obtain a tripartite declaration in favour of India's independence. Hitler turned down Mussolini's proposal. Subhas had now no doubt as to where he should be. He wrote to Ribbentrop on May 22, 1942 that "Now the time has come when the final effort should be made for achieving India's political emancipation. For this purpose it is absolutely essential that I should be in the East."

Did Subhas support Nazis

It is however pertinent to note that Bose had no sympathy with Nazi ideology. Writes Girija Mukherjee who was close associate, "The first thing we need to do in order to have a clear understanding of Subhas Bose's views on Germany, Italy and the countries which fought against England is to refer to Subhas Bose's numerous writings and statements on them. If we do that, we will find that nowhere in his speech or in writings and he has ever praised or supported Nazi or Fascist ideas. I have read practically everything he has written and nowhere could I discover any writing of his in which he shows that he was attracted by the ideas of depriving others of liberty or of oppressing people because of their political beliefs or because of the race they belonged to. On the contrary, a child of Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century, Subhas Bose, who imbibed in his youth the ideas of Tagore, Aurobindo, Vivekananda and Gandhi, was a profound humanist in the Hindu sense of the term as revealed in his letters written in Bengali, published in the book Patravali. These letters are eloquent testimonies of his deeply ingrained sense of liberalism and love of liberty. We have a further testimony of this love of liberty in his now famous letter he wrote to Dr. Franz Thierfelder of Munich in March 1936. Subhas Bose was in Munich towards the end of 1935 and he tried to meet an important German Minister in order to make him acquainted with the Indian situation. Dr. Thierfelder, the founder, together with Dr. Taraknath Das of the Indian Institute of Munich, tried to arrange this interview. As he was unable to meet him and as he was deeply pained at the racial discrimination practised by the Nazis, he left

Germany in disgust and expressed this feeling in a letter to his friend Dr. Thierfelder. Bose writes that before leaving Germany (1935) he should say a few words about what he thought of the country and the people. He writes: "When I first visited Germany in 1933, I had hopes that the new German nation which had risen to a consciousness of its national strength and self-respect would instinctively feel a deep sympathy for other nations struggling in the same direction. Today, I regret that I have to return to India with the conviction that the new nationalism of Germany is not only narrow and selfish but arrogant." Referring to a speech made by Hitler, Bose writes: "Herr Hitler has talked of the destiny of the white races to rule over the rest of the world. But the historical fact is, that up till now the Asiatics have dominated Europe more than have the Europeans dominated Asia ... We who are struggling for our own freedom desire that all nations should be free and that Europe and Asia should be at peace with one another. It, therefore, pains us that the new nationalism in Germany is inspired by selfishness and racial arrogance". He then adds: "Germany in her desire to curry favour with Great Britain finds it convenient to attack India and the Indian people."

The same idea had been echoed by Kitti Kurti, a Jewish German friend of Bose who deeply respected and appreciated the spiritual side of Subhas.

Between 1933 and 1939, for example, he had for friends Kitty and Alex, a Jewish couple in Berlin. In 1965, Kitty Kurti wrote a book, "Subhas Chandra Bose as I knew Him". She reminisced that Bose "did not attempt to hide" from her his deep contempt for the Nazis. In the same vein, he cited India's exploitation by British imperialism and explained why he had to do business with the Nazis. "It is dreadful but it must be done. ...India must gain her independence, cost what it may," he told the couple after a meeting with Hermann Göring. He added with passion, "Have you an idea, Mrs. Kurti, of the despair, the misery, the humiliation of India? can you imagine her suffering and indignation? British Imperialism there can be just as intolerable as your Nazism here, I assure you."

Girija Mukherjee rightly points out that the closest collaborator of Bose had been Adam von Trott zu Solz who in 1944 plotted the assassination of Adolf Hitler along with Count Stauffenberg. Even though Subhas had taken material help and support from Nazi Germany, he took it as a loan to be paid off in full when India would be free and set up its Independent Government in India. Later in 1944, as the Head of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, Bose remitted 5 million yen (equivalent to 200,000 Reich Marks) through the German Ambassador in Tokyo, with the full knowledge of the Japanese Government, as the first of four installments towards the repayment of the loan by the German Government to the Free India Office.



Bose's concern was India and India only and for this he was ready to shake hands with even the devil himself. When two satanic forces are fighting with each other - Imperialism and Fascism, supplemented and aided by another satanic force of Communism, pure ideals of Nationalism has to side with one, in the greater interest of the Nation. Imperialism was the greater evil for India and Bose had made his choice. Leftists, academics and white supremacists may deride Bose in any forum but to an ardent Nationalist his gesture will never be misinterpreted

Bose meets Hitler

On May 29 (a different version says May 27), 1942, Bose finally came to meet Fuehrer of the Third Reich face to face. The conversation was mainly a monologue from Hitler, and Bose, despite his obvious differences of opinion remained quiet as the former harangued on how it was impossible to align the interests of Germany and India and how India as it was tactically not prudent to confront Hitler. Bose raised the issue of his journey to East Asia to which Hitler agreed and promised to provide logistical support

to travel by submarine. Bose was peeved by one of the comments of Hitler and told his German interpreter to tell the Herr Fuehrer not to lecture him (Bose) on politics as he had done politics almost his entire life. The interpreter did not find the courage to translate this. Bose also raised the matter of Hitler's anti Indian rants in *Mein Kampf* and sought a clarification. Hitler was evasive. After giving Bose an idea of the geopolitical compulsions, Hitler extended his best wishes to the Indian revolutionary. Girija Mukherjee notes that the meeting was a disappointment for Subhas. He also considered Hitler as a raving mad, a German version of the Fakir of Ipi. Bose said in a key broadcast that internal politics of Germany or Japan did not concern India. He said clearly that external collaboration with the Axis powers did not mean accepting their socio-economic policies or for that matter their position in India's internal affair.

Quit India Movement – A Leaderless Movement by People of India

In April 1942 Gandhiji drew closer to Bose in his goals. Gandhiji had drafted a resolution calling upon British to quit India. Congress under Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad adopted a water down version of the resolution in the second week of July. Bose being pragmatic wrote to Ribbentrop that he wanted to be in the Far East by August 1942 to support and help in India's internal struggles. He was also expecting a major movement in India after the meeting of All India Congress Committee on August 8. Quit India resolution was adopted by Congress mainly by the insistence of Gandhi, despite a reluctant Nehru and Patel to go for an all-out confrontation with British Government. Viceroy Linlithgow who knew Congress intimately had chalked up a plan to crush the movement ruthlessly. The Government swooped down on the morning of 9th Aug and arrested the entire leadership of Congress. The socialist leaders like Jaiprakash Narayan and Aruna Asaf Ali went underground. Indian public responded stoutly. Students, working population and young men took the initiatives and created massive unrest. Government establishments were under attack. Gandhi had given a call for do or die, *karenge ya marenge*. The masses did not have any leaders to guide them. Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League stayed away from the movement to protect their communal interests. Dr. Syama Prasad Mukerjee who had formed a government with Fazlul Haq's Krishak Praja Party, tried to maintain a distance as a tactical measure to ensure better Governance for Bengal and to avoid open hostilities with the British. Dr. R.C Majumdar wrote that Syama Prasad expressed apprehension that the movement would create internal disorder and would endanger internal security. The movement had impacts in many areas like Satara, Medinipur, Ballia, Surat. In Medinipur the movement was crushed violently and ruthlessly until the great famine of 1943 suspended the movement. Over 100,000 arrests were made and many civilians killed in police firing. In

Medinipur police opened fire on a satyagrahi procession that killed the old Matangini Hazra bearing the Congress flag. By March 1943 the movement petered out.



Matangini Hazra – died by police firing while leading a procession during Quit India movement. Image courtesy Wikipedia

“My objective in leaving India was to supplement from outside the struggle going on at home”

Indian Legion – Rise and Fall

Der Indische Legion, its Foundation

Rudolf Hartog, in his book "The Sign of the Tiger" provides a vivid insider account of the formation, the activities and the significance of the Indian Legion that was formed by His excellency Herr Subhas Chandra Bose. He expresses his profound admiration as to how Bose, coming to Germany as a fugitive, developed a significant presence so as to establish a propaganda centre, an office and a well-equipped and well-trained army with all the help and support from the German Army, even without being an active Nazi sympathizer or collaborator. In fact much of the help came from the anti-Nazi camp, and as Hartog recalls, many of the German staff of the Free India office had joined the service so as to escape the Nazis, as this was one office that was free of any direct Nazi influence and intervention. The story of Indian Legion is one of an incredible journey backed by determination, courage, persistence, and an inspirational leadership on one hand, and a sense of betrayal, lack of purpose, insubordination and a sad end of a vision on the other hand. In many ways, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was possibly let down by the German authorities, viz. the Nazis, which led to a less than heroic end for the Indian Legion troopers, in comparison with their more valiant brothers in arms in the Indian National Army. None in India knew about the Legion. The British historians and the Government and intelligence machinery tried their best to behave as if the Legion did not exist, it was merely a figment of imagination or a willful distortion of facts by the Germans. They had their reasons though. Any such news of desertion from the allied forces in the theater of European war could have severe repercussions in the Indian Army ranks. Some of the historians also tried their best to undermine its purpose and activities. William Shirer in his Rise and Fall of Third Reich quotes Hitler on Indian Legion, "Indian Legion is a joke. There are Indians who wouldn't kill a louse, who would rather let themselves to be eaten up. They won't kill an Englishman either. I consider it nonsense to put them opposite the English." Shirer does not think it worthwhile to dig deeper into the Legion's role. He did not think that Hitler was obviously wrong, that a section of the Indians did kill the British and created terror in their minds.

The Zentrale Freies Indien or the Free India Centre was established in Berlin, Lichtenstein Allee no. 10 and was inaugurated on 2nd Nov, 1941. The staff soon grew to be thirty five and the effort was focused on broadcasting propaganda to India, supported by ten German experts, through the Azad Hind Radio in various Indian local languages. In his original plan to the foreign office, Bose did not mention about setting

up a contingent of Indian troops on the German soil. Few Indian prisoners of war had been brought to Berlin. Bose met the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop at the Hotel Imperial in Vienna on 29th April 1941 where he added the possibility of setting up an Indian contingent drawn from the Indian prisoners of war, largely to undermine the loyalty of the British Indian Army. In a meeting with Walter Harbich in the Hotel Esplanade, Bose made the plan concrete. Walter Harbich was to train an Indo German commando unit for possible operations in the North West Frontier Province area, to support the Operation Tiger (German plan of advancing into India via Afghanistan). With Rommel's invincible march in the Africa and with German victory in the Europe, the plan seemed a good fit to the overall military strategy of the Axis power.

In 1941 everything was going good for the Axis powers. Japan had developed a formidable presence on the Pacific islands and was busy in liberating Asia from the European colonial powers. German blitzkrieg was unstoppable in the East Europe and in Mediterranean and Germany was planning for the Operation Barbarossa and the Operation Tiger. It had conquered Greece and against a stubborn resistance, Crete. In Iraq the pro German government of Rashid Ali el Gailani was in power and in occupied France, Vichy was at the helm. So loyal French troops had been deployed in the Middle East Asian countries like Syria. General Rommel, the desert fox, was rapidly advancing towards Egypt and the fall of Egypt seemed imminent. The whole of British position in the Asia was threatened and the oil fields were to fall in German hands. The German plan, as formulated by General Halder, was to launch a three pronged attack from Libya/Egypt, Bulgaria/Turkey and the Caucasus and set up an operational base in Afghanistan to threaten India from the North West. It would enable the British to come to the table for negotiations. However the situations did not go as per the plan as the Nazi leadership failed to understand the strategic importance of Asia. Reinforcements and support were lacking and British soon recovered their ground in the Middle East. Germany got more and more entangled in Russia, culminating in a fierce battle in Stalingrad, where the Barbarossa was decidedly lost, inflicting severe blow to the German capabilities of pushing any further.

The Military Strategy

Afghanistan was the centre stage for Operation Tiger. The mountainous terrains had many tribes who did not submit to the British. The German plan was to foment rebellion with the help of these tribes and a sizable no. of German and Italian undercover agents were operating in these areas. Italians had a long standing connection with the Fakir of Ipi, who was one such rebel leader of the tribe of the Masuds in Waziristan. Baurat

Wenger, who was to accompany Bose in his journey to Berlin, was one such agent and their base was the German legation in Kabul that corresponded with the foreign office in Berlin. Large scale sabotage was planned as part of the revolutionary activities. It is to be noted that Netaji had a similar plan and hence he had traveled to Kabul and also tried to connect the Bengal Volunteers with the North West rebel leaders. Because of the treachery of Bhagat Ram Talwar, the scheme had failed. The Nazi leadership plan was to first finish off Russia and then advance from the Caucasus to the Afghanistan. The German plan did not materialize despite spending a huge amount of money, on account of the ambiguous position of the Government in Kabul whom they could not fully trust and also the lack of trust and cooperation between the Germans and the Italians operating there. The original plan was to start a series of sabotage activities, parachute dropping of the troops to carry out commando style operations starting with the Bajaur area. With the failure of the Operation Tiger, Subhas Bose had to abandon his plan of campaign from the Afghanistan and instead set his sight on the Far East.

Recruitment and Training of the Legionaries

Subhas Chandra Bose went to the camp of Indian PoW in Meseritz, managed by Walter Harbich. Bose had advised Harbich on organizing the troops without differentiating on religious or caste grounds as was the norm with the British Indian troops who were segregated along those lines. The command was drawn from the volunteers who were mostly Indians in exile or the prisoners of war from France and North Africa. They were trained for commando operations like wireless technology, sabotage, parachute jumping, mountain warfare etc. Major Swami, who later accompanied Bose to South East Asia, was to get trained here. The commandos in this camp never got to participate in actual warfare and they were later merged into the Indian Legion that was set up mostly with the prisoners of war camp in Koenigsbruck, set up in December, 1942.

In Italy Iqbal Shidei, who was a supporter of Jinnah and Muslim League, had set up an Indian Legion in Italy with the Indian prisoners of war. He used to broadcast daily to India on his Himalaya radio and also had a very cordial relationship with the Italian foreign Ministry. Shidei was also unfavourably disposed towards the fiercely Nationalistic and Unity advocate Bose. So initially Germans had to choose between them and ultimately Bose triumphed because of his strength of character which won him many friends on the German side and also because he had a sound plan. A joint declaration was made in Berlin in a conference in December 1941 by the Germans and the Italians in which Bose participated on the second day, and it was agreed to hand over the Indian Legion wholly to the Germans for setting up and training. Italians

however did not handover all the prisoners of war and maintained a small battalion on their soil under Shidei. After a mutiny in their ranks the whole division was transferred to Germany.

From Annaburg camp, the Indian PoW from Rommel's North Africa theater were moved to Koenigsbruck. Subhas Chandra Bose had visited the Annaburg camp in December 1941 to win over the men. Initially he did not get much response owing to the hostile attitude of the NCOs. Free India centre volunteers however continued their propaganda and by January 1942 about two hundred were identified and around sixty eight were brought to the camp in Frankenberg. The first fifteen were specially trained by Free India Centre in Berlin and Bose himself addressed them. No coercion was used to recruit volunteers. There was a plan to make the Legion a part of the Sonderstab F, the special forces that was supposed to march to Caucasus under Felmy's command. This was stationed in Greece. Originally it was supposed to go to India via West Asia. Subhas Chandra Bose was completely against the plan of including Indian Legion in the Sonderstab F and ultimately his wish prevailed. Propaganda and recruitment for the Legion from among the Indian prisoners of war was exclusively with the Free India Centre volunteers. By November 1942, the Indian Legion had grown to be 1300 strong in two battalions. Training of the troops progressed rapidly under their German commanders and officers like Kritter and Major Krappe. One of the stumbling blocks was the language as the Legionaries neither had a good grasp of German nor English. Hindustani was adopted as the common language and the German instructors had to learn the equivalent words for proper communication. The overall process of communication and understanding was very challenging at first, since the Germans and the Indians belonged to two vastly different cultures and norms. The German commanding officers had to overlook many behaviours in their Indian men which would have led to court martial for German soldiers. By October 1942 the troop was well trained to hold a maneuver where Bose and Japanese military attaché Col. Yamamoto were present. The men were sworn under the new flag with Tri Colour and the Springing Tiger. In their arm patch of the uniform was a Springing Tiger insignia on the right sleeve. The Legion was officially known by the name Infanterie Regiment (Ind) IR 950.

By the beginning of the February 1943, the size of the legion had grown to be about two thousand. There were Hindus, Muslims and Sikh soldiers - almost 59% was Hindu, another 25% Muslim and 20% Sikh. According to an estimate there were about 3115 Legionaries by 1944. The Legion was supposed to maintain a code of unity, in that there should be no differentiation in terms of religion and caste. All the unit were mixed in contrast with the British Indian Army which had maintained strict division according to

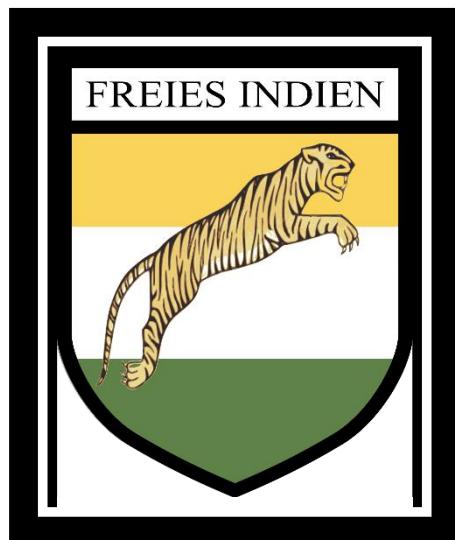
religion, caste or creed. In that respect it was supposed to form the convention for the Army of the independent India. The Legion, according to the vision of Bose, was to fight only for Indian independence. Subhas Bose obtained an agreement with the German Government that Indian Legion could not be deployed against any forces other than the British. The Legion would be specially trained to become a core army when India became independent. It would foster a spirit of unity and harmony among the different Indian races. There were practical problems as the diets of different sections were different, as also the method of slaughter of animals, and the holidays. There were some frictions and feuds leading to killings in few cases. On an overall basis however the Legionaries came to accept this spirit and it helped them later under extremely difficult circumstances. Bose had also laid the condition that all who volunteered for the Legion were supposed to start as an ordinary soldier. This caused problem as the higher rank PoW did not want to join. In the course of time many Legionaries were promoted as officers. There were problems galore. For instance, any harsh treatment of the soldiers would be misinterpreted by the soldiers as discriminatory and the Germans, who were not particularly adept in cross cultural sensitivity, had a hard time dealing with such issues. On one instance several soldiers had laid down their arms. Such discipline issues needed to be treated carefully and over a period of time better understanding developed between the officers and the men.

One more problem of the Legion was that their oath was to both Subhas Chandra Bose and to Adolf Hitler. This was unique in the history of German military. Another difficulty was Subhas's condition that the Legion was only to be deployed against the British army and not for furthering German interests elsewhere, so that the legionaries felt that they were fighting for the freedom of India. There was a proposal of deploying the troops in the battles of North Africa. That however did not materialize. It was not because of Rommel refusing to have the legionaries in his ranks as has been claimed by the British historians, but because the campaign there had already ended. The other major problem was Subhas Chandra Bose's secret departure from Germany for the Far East. Bose had not communicated to the legionaries, nor to the Free India Centre on his plan, for obvious reasons of secrecy. But this could be misconstrued in some quarters as his irresponsibility in leaving the legionaries in the lurch. But Bose had planned his succession in Free India Centre. The task of the Free India Centre was not merely broadcasting over Azad Hind radio, but also to carry out propaganda among the prisoners of war, recruiting them for the Legion and getting new volunteers. It had among its Indian staff Major Swami, Habibur Rahman, N.G Ganpuley, N.R Vyas, Girija Mukherjee and Bose's close confidante A.C.N Nambiar. Habibur Rahman, N.G Swamy and Abid Hasan Safrani had accompanied Bose to the Far East. Nambiar therefore

became Bose's deputy in the centre. It was also decided to continue with the propaganda within the Legion, by publication of newspapers, radio broadcasts, and also by bringing out a periodical called Bhaiband. The Legion had its own broadcasting station with daily transmission to the troops, called Bhaiband transmission. Legion also had its own marching song - "Age ao, kadam badhao, milkar sare bhai". Gallantry medals were also designed for the Legion. The highest order, the Sher-i-Hind was awarded to the Legion Commander Kurt Krappe in September 1944. Azad Hind stamps were also issued in preparation for the National Government of Subhas Chandra Bose.



Image courtesy Sign of the Tiger by Rudolf Hartog & Creative Commons



Legion is pushed into the great war

On 8 February 1943, Bose left Germany from Kiel along with Abid Hasan, in a submarine. The war was still on and the Legion was ready for action as it was equipped and fully trained on combat readiness. In absence of Bose, German High Command had the sole responsibility for it. It was decided to deploy the troops in the Netherlands for coastal defences, via Belgium, where they had greater likelihood of facing the British army and accordingly marching orders were issued for the first battalion on 27 April, 1943, and on the following day for the second battalion. This led to the first crisis as several men refused to pack. One of the reasons might be that they were promised by their recruiters of Free India Centre that they would be deployed only against the British en route to India. The other important reason was the absence of Subhas Chandra Bose of whom they had no news. This was one of the gravest wartime situations and the Germans were unprepared to deal with it. The insubordination led to the court martial of at least forty seven Legionaries and their subsequent imprisonment. The hard sentences did not have any effect. However, the officers spoke with their men, reasoned

with them and this gesture helped most of the men to report for duty for the new assignment. The battalions were first deployed in Belgium and then in Netherlands. The local residents, in Germany and in Netherlands, were friendly to the Indian soldiers. The third battalion was still not cooperative. By July 1943, an operative from Free India Centre came with a message from Subhas Chandra Bose. By this time Bose had been in Singapore and had taken handover from Rashbehari Bose on 4th July, as the president of the Indian Independence League and the leader of the Indian National Army. This helped in convincing the Legionaries of their valuable role in India's freedom movement and whatever doubts they had about Bose, had disappeared. The third battalion was subsequently transferred to the Netherlands. Field Marshall von Rundstedt visited their camp. Training for the unit continued under combat conditions. Legion was then moved to the Atlantic coast, South of France, in Bay of Biscay.

The three battalions operated independently; but they were located closely. In October 1943 the Legion was reorganized as a full Regiment and was assigned to protect the strategic coastal defence line. The regiment headquarters were at Lacanau, almost at the same level as the second battalion, north of which was the first battalion stationed at Lac de Carcans, and to the south in Lege was the third battalion. They had built fortifications and trenches along the sea coast, building machine gun positions, anti-tank shelters and bunkers. Field Marshall Rommel visited the Indian units in February 1944, and was satisfied by the quality of their work. The weather during the winter was nice and warm in the southern sea coast. But Indian diets, esp. rice and spices were not easy to find. As supposed prisoners of war, members of the Legion had the right to receive food parcels from the Red Cross. These parcels sent by the British Red Cross, which grew in significance with the progress of the war as supply conditions worsened, contained, among other things, cigarettes, chocolate, condensed milk, tea, spices, meat pies, biscuits, and preserved fruit (The Last Chapter of the Indian Legion by Joachim Oesterheld). The men shared the contents of their Red Cross parcels and often visited their comrades in other companies to have a social life as the life in the coasts was lonely. The local inhabitants had racial prejudice and did not interact well with the "coloured" men. Several men of the Indian Legion got their commission as Lieutenants, among them were Jaswant Singh Bindra, Gurbachan Singh Mangat, Inder Singh, Adolf Abdullah Khan, Allah Dad Khan and medical officers like Dr. Madan, Dr. Pathankar and Dr. Bose.

On 6th June 1944, the allied forces had landed in Normandy. The Legion was now put on high alert. German reserve troops were withdrawn and the Legion was handed over a longer coastline for protection. There were now frequent moves and uncertainty

among the ranks owing the impending allied victory. The order of retreat finally came and withdrawal had to be made posthaste. The battalions first moved by train. En route they were often ambushed by the French partisans, the Maquis. Also at this stage Heinrich von Trott, one of the officers, hearing the news of his brother Adam von Trott's arrest and execution for conspiracy against Hitler, had defected. About thirty Legionaries also defected with them. The Maquis treated them very badly and while the Germans were handed over to the British allied forces, the Indians were all shot dead. As per 'The Last Chapter of the Indian Legion' by Joachim Oesterheld, "A French eyewitness recollects 22 September 1944 in Poitiers as he saw it: A truck with about 20 or 25 Indians arrived [...] and stopped about 50 meters from the balcony of the town hall. Everyone, and there were many people present in the square, who were returning from work, looked at the Indians. It only lasted a few seconds, and a soldier of the FFI [Forces Francaises de l'Interieur] climbed down from the driver's cabin, machine gun in hand. He opened the rear hatch, climbed into the truck, and mowed down the Indians. It all only lasted a few seconds. The Indians fell on their faces. The truck was riddled with bullet holes, and blood flowed in rivulets. Reactions were quite varied. There were screams and exclamations, but there was also applause, and then everything was over. The truck then drove in the direction of the prefecture, and disappeared." The killing was apparently in revenge for the atrocities committed by a few Legionaries on French women and in retaliation to the killing of the resistance forces in the hands of the Legion members.

End Game for the Legion

The military situation was rapidly deteriorating for the retreating troops of the Legions, as was with their counterpart in South East Asia, the INA. Paris fell to the Allies on August 25. The Americans had landed in the Southern coast. The retreat to Germany was risk prone, logistics was in short supply and it was left up to the unit commanders to plan for the movement. They had to move through territories where the Maquis lay in ambush. During the day, the Allied bombers flying overhead made it impossible to move and therefore movement was restricted to night. The Legion encountered the French troops of the Allied forces and Lt. Ali Khan was killed in the combat. The retreat continued through the valley of Burgundy, one unit had a tough battle against the advancing Americans and Lt. Mohammed Rashid proved his mettle by destroying several enemy tanks, which had to retreat. The Legion marched through Alsace and eventually reached the camp of Oberhofen by traversing almost seven hundred miles in three weeks, mostly on foot, with all their equipment, which, according to Rudolf, was

not a mean feat. This feat alone is completely contradictory to the British propaganda that the Legion did not fight and most of the men deserted.

The communication from Subhas Chandra Bose, their beloved Netaji, was one of the forces that held the Legion together during these moments of extreme duress. That they were fighting for a cause, for the liberation of their motherland, for which their brothers in arms in the South East Asia were fighting a death defying battle and had recaptured some of the territories on Indian soil, was enough to motivate the Legionaries to fight. After the formation of Azad Hind Provisional Government Subhas Chandra Bose had sent a special message for the legionaries on 22 November, 1943. "The Indian Legion in Europe, which I had the honour to found, is now part of the Indian National Army, and should from now on fight the enemy, wherever he is found."

One company was directed to go to the Italian front, and it included Jaswant Singh Bindra, one of the Lieutenants. They had to battle heavy enemy fires and had to confront the British Army. They also had to engage with the partisans of Italian resistance during their retreat. They had held back until April 1945. Several legionaries fell in the enemy air attack while retreating. It had to engage in several smaller and larger encounters until it could return to its regiment in German camp of Heuberg.

The Free India Centre held a press conference to counter the BBC propaganda that the Legion was decimated and its men were captured by the Allied forces. A.C.N Nambiar, who was the Minister of State of the Provisional Government of Free India, commander Krappe, and Indian officers Gurbachan Singh Mangat and Adolf Abdullah Khan, were present. Mohammad Rashid, decorated for bravery, was also present.

By 1st week of April, American and French troops had crossed Rhine and proceeded towards South. The Legion was also ordered to move from Heuberg. In Oberhofen, the Indian Legion was unexpectedly transferred to the Waffen-SS, the dreaded military arm of Heinrich Himmler. The Directive was issued in August but it was operational only in April 1945. After the failed assassination attempt on Hitler, Himmler was able to get the Fuehrer's agreement on taking all foreign legions into SS, Indian Legion being no exception. Repeated attempts by the Legion commanders to stop the transfer failed. German officers were given the option of seeking a transfer to the battle front. Krappe stayed on as his men wanted him to. The German officers had decided to seek the help of the Swiss Government to grant asylum to the Indians as Switzerland was neutral in the war. But the Legionaries, who knew that they would be treated as traitors and defectors by the Allied forces, were no longer willing to move and instead were taken

prisoners at different locations. Some including Lt. Jaswant Singh Bindra, were taken prisoner by the French. The Reserve battalion in Koenigsbruck had surrendered to the Americans in Bavaria. Others had surrendered in Weiler. The German officers were put under trial by the French authorities for the alleged transgressions of their men in Bordeaux. Krappe was set free on 26 January, 1950, a day significant for India as the Republic Day, the day of the birth of her Constitution. Most of the Indian Legionaries were taken prisoners by the French, were held under the harshest conditions and were handed over to the British. They were interned in the Bahadurgarh camp near Delhi. They were also classified like INA into black, grey and whites. They were finally discharged in 1946, after the end of the Red Fort trials.

Web sources:

- <https://salute.co.in/a-forgotten-army-the-legion-freies-indien/>
- [The Last Chapter of the Indian Legion by JOACHIM OESTERHELD](#)
- [Wikipedia article on Indian Legion](#)

“For an enslaved people, there can be no greater pride, no higher honour, than to be the first soldier in the army of liberation”

Far East – Realizing the Vision

The Submarine Journey

The submarine was a U 180 with its forward torpedo tubes removed to create a space for the extra cargo. Bose and Abid Hasan spent time in planning for the upcoming venture. The submarine took a route via Danish water to the Norwegian coast and entered the North Sea, passed through Iceland and entered the rough waters of the Atlantic. According to the vivid account of Prof. Sugato Bose in His Majesty's Opponent, the most feared opponent of British, Subhas Chandra Bose, their most resolute and resourceful enemy, was on the move, stealthily, under the water. The British had much to rejoice. The war situation in the Western theater was clearly in their favour as Erwin Rommel was stopped by General Montgomery in the battle field of El Alamein on Nov 4, 1942. Rommel never received the much needed reinforcements promised by the Fuehrer. After their rapid advance in Russia, the invincible German army was defeated

by the harsh Soviet winter and a desperate, resolute Red army in Stalingrad in February 1943. Mahatma in India was undertaking a fast and Quit India Movement was decisively crushed. Bose alone was the last man standing against the formidable and the invincible Empire. Fortunately however the allies did not have the means to hunt him under the sea. According to the recollections of Abid Hassan, the stench of the diesel oil permeated the air, the food and the blankets. Bose was given a small bunk. Abid gathered some lentils and rice and cooked a Khichdi. Bose and Abid worked tirelessly on the revisions of Indian Struggle and in preparing for the challenges in Asia like negotiation strategy with the Japanese and methods to win over the trust of the officers of the British Indian army. He also wrote out or dictated the speeches he would make to the soldiers of INA, to Hasan for typing. He made future plans for a Government in exile, including having a woman's regiment and putting them in uniform of trousers and shirts. Bose shared with Abid his fear of his worst fate as "to be in exile". In the face of extreme stress Bose showed great courage and detachment. The U 180 had a mandate to attack enemy ships. On April 18 in the South Atlantic, the submarine, on sighting the British merchant ship S.S Corbis, fired torpedoes and the ship went down in flames. Couple of days later another cargo ship was sighted and the U boat had accidentally surfaced. It had to dive back to prevent from getting rammed by the British vessel. In the midst of the crisis Bose remained unperturbed and went on dictating his instructions to Hasan. The captain of the U boat Musenberg instructed his sailors to emulate the conduct of the revered guest in dangerous situation, i.e. by staying calm and composed.



Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Abid Hasan, his secretary, on a submarine journey that started in Kiel in secrecy, to reach Madagascar by circumnavigating almost half the world in order to escape the allied forces. The submarine journey was extremely dangerous

The submarine rounded the Cape of Good Hope and entered Indian Ocean. On April 20, 1943, the Japanese submarine I 29 had left Penang. Its captain was Teraoka. The two submarines met each other near Madagascar coast. The sea was very rough for the transfer of the passengers, so they waited for a day or two and at last took the risk and transferred Bose and Abid using a raft and a rope. A very drenched Bose got a warm welcome from his Asian colleagues. This is the only submarine to submarine transfer in the history of the two world wars, that too in enemy waters. The risk of this venture was great as the mortality rate in U boats was fairly high. Bose and Hasan were at home with the Japanese. The submarine was bigger and spacious. Teraoka vacated his cabin for Bose. I 29 crossed South India, picked up a message from Penang to take passengers to Sabang and on May 6 it docked safely in Sabang. Col. Yamamoto, whom he had met before in Germany was there in Sabang to greet him. After a few days rest Bose boarded a small Japanese plane to go to Tokyo by mid May. Netaji stayed therein the Imperial hotel. He checked in as Matsuda, a Japanese alternative of Mazzotta.

Indian National Army and the Story of the Other Bose

I am a Fighter, one fight more, the last and the best - Rashbehari Bose

According to the History of Freedom Movement volume 3 by Dr. R. C Majumdar, "The outbreak of war in the East in 1941 caused a great stirring among the Indians in these regions. Those living in territories freed from European domination organized themselves into associations with the main objects of contributing their quota to the liberation of India from the British yoke and serving the interests of the overseas Indians during the critical period of transition. Such associations were established in a large no. of towns and villages and attained great popularity. Out of these associations was born the idea of an Indian Independence League of which they regarded themselves as branches. A definite shape was given to this idea by the great Indian revolutionary, Rashbehari Bose."

India has forgotten her one of the best sons who gave his life for her cause. Rashbehari Bose was born in 1886 in Bengal. After Aurobindo went into seclusion, he became the most dreaded revolutionary and the enemy no. one of the British Government. Rashbehari had hoped to join British Indian Army at an early age against his father's wishes. But British Indian army did not accept him. He eventually was posted in the Forest Research institute service in Dehra Dun as a clerk and in that position he masterminded a brilliant attack on the British. On the occasion of a great ceremony organized in Delhi to commemorate the shifting of capital from Calcutta to Delhi, Basanta Biswas, a young revolutionary under the tutelage of Rashbehari, had thrown a bomb on Lord Hardinge who was riding an elephant, thereby critically injuring the Viceroy and killing the mahaut. A manhunt was soon launched. Rashbehari even led a condemnation assembly against the attack in Dehra Dun. When the conspiracy was discovered and police caught the key leaders of the plot, despite their best attempts to catch him, Rashbehari still remained elusive. He planned a coordinated mass uprising taking advantage of the ongoing first world war, along with Ghadar party, Raja Mahendra Pratap, Sachindranath Sanyal, Kartar Singh, Vishnu Ganesh Pingle and the members of the Berlin committee, and another mastermind of revolutionary activities, Jatindranath Mukherjee, popularly called as Bagha Jatin. The mass uprising in the barracks failed because of a betrayal. Bagha Jatin's plan of an armed revolution was shattered when the German cargo with the consignment of arms destined for Orissa coast, was captured. Rashbehari's close associate Vishnu Ganesh Pingle and Kartar Singh were hanged. Sachindranath Sanyal was deported to the Andamans. A number of mutineers were shot dead after court martial. In Singapore mutineers had won their battle against the British army, but in absence of a coordinated action they had to

surrender and were mostly killed by British. Rashbehari could flee from Lahore and by a series of miraculous escapes backed by his capability of disguise, boarded a vessel to Japan.

In Japan initially he was planned to be deported to India through the active intervention of the British Embassy, but timely help from Mitsuru Toyama of the Black Dragon society and other notable Japanese sympathetic to the India's cause, made his continued stay in Japan possible. He married Toshiko, daughter of Aizo and Kokko Soma, owners of the Nakamuraya bakery in Tokyo in 1918 in order to gain citizenship in Japan. Just one example of his dexterity and genius - he learnt the Japanese language in just 4 months. Bose and Toshiko had led the life of fugitives as they had to constantly move in order to escape assassination bids on Bose by the British spies. Their marriage lasted only eight years till Toshiko died in 1924. They had a son and a daughter. After Toshiko's death Rashbehari devoted his life for the pursuit of his dream of seeing a free India. He got the citizenship in Japan and along with A. M Nair was instrumental in influencing Japanese people to be sympathetic to the Indian cause. He wrote many articles on the British rule, its impact on India and successfully gained the attention of the Japanese people and Government to look favorably upon India's right to get freedom. It was mainly his efforts that let the Japanese Government to decide in favour of releasing Indian prisoners of war to form an army that would eventually be a Japanese ally to take on British in South East Asia.



Rashbehari Bose, president of the Indian Independence League and Captain Mohan Singh, commander of the newly formed Indian National Army, taking guards from the soldiers of INA in 1942. Mohan Singh later dissolved the INA on account of differences with the Japanese and was arrested. INA was in a disarray, to be reorganized by Rashbehari, until Subhas Bose came and took responsibility on 4th July 1943. Image courtesy newsgram.com



Rashbehari Bose, in Japan, along with Mitsuyo Toyama, head of the Black Dragon Society, who helped the young revolutionary escape deportation and settle in Japan. Toyama arranged for the stay of Rashbehari with the Soma family of the Nakamuraya bakery, and his marriage with the eldest daughter Toshiko. Rashbehari taught the Indian cuisine to Japanese society and also carried out his fight for India's freedom by creating awareness among East Asians. Image courtesy Wikipedia

Formation of Indian National Army and Azad Hind

The book 'Jai Hind, The Diary of a Rebel Daughter of India' gives a vivid account of the turbulent period in the South East Asia when the Japanese tsunami swept the British away from the islands. "Everyone is now realizing that the British Empire is not impregnable, that defeat and disgrace can also besmirch its flag. On 7th December (1941), the Japs struck the initial blow at Pearl Harbour. Guam fell on 13th, Wake Island on 22nd, Hong Kong on 25th, Manila on 2nd January. Penang is in Japanese hand from 20th December. Ipoh, the industry base, fell on 29th December." By February Malaya fell in Japanese hands. Then came the turn of the "impregnable" Singapore. "15000 British, 13,000 Australian and 32,000 Indian troops surrendered" on February 15, as per the diary entry of the rebel daughter.

In October 1941 Major Fujiwara, had contacted Gyani Pritam Singh, a nationalist spiritual leader who was based out of Bangkok. Pritam Singh was part of Indian Independence League. Swami Satyananda Puri and Debnath Das too joined him. In

December 1941 Captain Mohan Singh and his associates of the British Indian Army had made a daring escape through the Malaya jungles after his army was defeated and captured by the Japanese forces in Malaya. Mohan Singh was taken to Bangkok by Giani Pritam Singh and was assured that Japanese considered Asia for Asiatics. Mohan Singh was persuaded to work for Indian independence and after a lot of discussions Mohan agreed to help the Japanese to win over the Indian soldiers to their side. After the fall of Singapore on 15th February 1942, Indian soldiers were separated from the British and Col. J. C Hunt handed over 40,000 Indian prisoners to Major Fujiwara, who told the soldiers to fight for the Indian National Army for India's freedom and be treated with dignity and respect. The message was received with overwhelming majority by the soldiers, though most of the officers remained non committal. It is estimated that around 40,000 soldiers joined the INA. There were several other reasons for soldiers to quit the British Indian army. There was widespread racial discrimination as Indian soldiers, even officers, received much lower salary than their British counterparts. The Indian officers did not get membership of most of the clubs. When the British were defeated in Malay their reputation as a superior force was tarnished.

Mohan Singh and Col. Naranjan Singh Gill wanted to send few daring army officers to India to prepare the people for the war with Britain. A 14 member team was supposed to travel, some via submarine, others via land. But the plan was compromised owing to the betrayal of Major Mahaveer Singh Dhillon and his close associates who surrendered to British along with all important documents. All others travelling via Arakan route and via submarine were captured by the British. Satyen Vardhan, Abdul Khader and two others were sent to the gallows. Col. A. C Chatterjee, a prominent member of INA had got wind of the plans of betrayal and had informed Rashbehari Bose. Rashbehari had informed Mohan Singh. Mohan Singh failed to act against Mahaveer Singh Dhillon.

When the war had started in the far east, Rashbehari Bose, who was widely respected in Japan, had met Field Marshal Sugiyama and asked for help for attack on India. Sugiyama had turned down the proposal. Rashbehari persisted in getting help from high level Japanese leaders and took initiative in forming the Indian Independence League (IIL) which established its branches across Asia. Because of Rashbehari's efforts, Japanese Army never treated Indians in their occupied territories with indignity. After the formation of the INA, Rashbehari Bose called for a conference of Indian Independence League members in Tokyo. The conference was held in March 1942. Unfortunately Swami Satyananda Puri, Gyani Pritam Singh and Mohd Akram Khan died in an air crash. In Tokyo conference it was decided to have a conference again in Bangkok to establish a united independence league. On 15 June 1942 the Bangkok

conference was held with Rashbehari Bose as the chairman. This conference passed a resolution that defined the role of the League in the independence movement, its relations with the Indian National Army, and the conditions for Japanese support. The Japanese had then established a liaison office under Iwakuro who replaced Fujiwara. The Iwakuro Kikan acted with arrogance and high handedness that irked the Indian military and civilian leadership.

Captain Mohan Singh, after his return from Tokyo conference called a conference of military officers of Indian origin. In this conference he first called for the formation of the Indian National Army as part of Indian independence movement. In Bangkok conference also Mohan Singh spoke on how he was instrumental in forming the Indian Army and fought the British. In that conference it was decided that Captain Mohan Singh would be the Commander in Chief of this Army of Liberation for India. The IIL would make arrangements for the supply of men, material, and money required by the INA and would coordinate with the Japanese Government to supply the necessary arms and equipment. INA would be commanded by Indian officers and would be only working for the liberation of India. A council of action was established with Rashbehari Bode as the president and Mohan Singh as the leader of the Army. Mohan Singh had only eight or nine years of experience and hence his elevation was not well accepted. British Indian Army officers like Shah Nawaz Khan stayed away from joining the INA. INA was formally established on 1st September 1942.

It was ordained that the INA would be free of religious and other biases and would be based on the threefold principles of Unity, Faith and Sacrifice. Because of desertions and betrayals of the officers, and lack of trust between Japanese and Indians, INA remained non-functional. Moreover Mohan Singh's haughtiness and impatience in dealing with the Japanese resulted in feuds and the Japan liaison office made some unfortunate comments against Mohan Singh. Mohan acted rashly by issuing an order to the army to dissolve INA and destroy all documents if he was arrested. He also wrote an unfortunate letter to the President of the Council Rashbehari Bose. He made the officers and soldiers take an oath not to join INA if it was formed again. The young men of the IIL in the meanwhile had decided to form a Youth League and wanted to control the movement themselves. Rashbehari Bose, despite his failing health and age, tried his best to reconcile the differences. In February 1943 he gave an assurance that Subhas Chandra Bose would come and take control of Azad Hind Fauj. This acted as catalyst for many to join and reconstitute the INA. Prior to Subhas's arrival the Japanese army had mistreated Indian army men by assigning them inferior duties, starving them, beating them, or worse sending the anti aircraft gun men to certain death. After

Subhas's arrival and under his leadership this kind of treatment completely stopped. Subhas had earlier sent a message from the Berlin Radio to the members of the Bangkok conference accepting their invitation to join IIL in its effort to liberate India with its own army. On July 2, Subhas Chandra Bose, accompanied by Abid Hasan, landed in Singapore in a twin engine Japanese aircraft. He was greeted with a song "*Subhasji Subhasji woh jaan e Hind aa gaye, woh naaz jispe Hind ko woh Shaan e Hind aa gaye*" composed by Mumtaz Hussain and set to music by Ram Singh Thakur. Now the most popular revolutionary leader was to take the reign from the most respected elder revolutionary who had spent his life fighting for India, and was preparing for his one last fight.

Situation in India - British Raj's absolute hold and Gandhi's defeat

Michael Edwardes in his book "The Last Years of British India" had said, the Government obliged Gandhi by treating him with considerable respect jailing him occasionally to keep up appearances while they took much more positive action against terrorists and those Western style revolutionaries whom they really feared." He went on, "The British felt that they had little to fear from Gandhi himself, for they soon recognized him for what he was - an anti Western reformer." "Gandhi's whole aim was to minimize violence; the Government's was the same." He added.

Gandhi was fasting in February 1943 but Viceroy Linlithgow was in no mood to placate him. The followers of Gandhi believed that the failure of the August movement was owing to the absence of Gandhi who was interned in the Aga Khan Palace in Pune. Gandhi suffered two personal tragedies as his secretary Mahadev Desai and wife Kasturba passed away while they were interned. Gandhi took a fast for self purification. The August movement turned violent in many places as Government tried extreme means to crush it ruthlessly. The movement was leaderless, disorganized and without any concrete programme, demonstrating a complete leadership failure on the part of Congress. R.C Majumdar observes that 1942 was really a soldier's battle. The general bungled but all glory to the soldiers who laid down their lives as martyrs. Gandhi was not destined to play any active role in struggle for India's freedom again. Gandhi failed in his chief objective of establishing Hindu Muslim unity. In his zeal to ensure the unity he had often acted in a partisan way, against the interests of the Hindus, much to the chagrin of the Hindu leaders. Muslims kept themselves aloof from August movement

and remained peaceful and neutral. Muslim League had established ministries in Bengal, Assam, Sindh, and NWFP and increased its influence in Punjab. Thus Jinnah had the supreme authority over the region he considered to be Pakistan. The role of Communist Party was the most disgraceful. They out and out betrayed the National cause in favour of what they considered as people's war. They virtually became agents of British Government with disastrous consequences for India. CPI had earlier sabotaged the Civil Disobedience movement. After a successful strike of the textile industry, Government had declared the party illegal. The party adopted a strategy of infiltrating Congress and sought to form an alliance with the socialists. This Trojan Horse policy was paid off. It used the Congress for its own propaganda. Communists also infiltrated among the student organizations. The conference of Communist students passed a resolution declaring India as a lose confederation of various states instead of being one Nation. This was done clearly to enlist the support of Muslim League. As soon as Hitler invaded Russia in June 1941 the Communists, foregoing their hitherto anti war stance actively supported the British war efforts. Communist leaders were set free, and acted as stooges or spies of the Government and helped them against their own country men. Communists also kept the workers out of national unrest. They supported the demand of Pakistan and sought to destroy the unity of India by openly playing second fiddle to the League. They also made an outrageous claim that every linguistic group in India had a distinct nationality and was therefore entitled to the right to secede. They infiltrated the All India Women's conference and set up literary and cultural organizations as centres of propaganda. It was paid back by the people of India when it failed to win a single seat in the general election to the Central Legislative Assembly. They had called Subhas Quisling of India, called him names like Tojo's dog and a Fascist leader, which led Subhas loyalist leader Leela Roy to stoutly denounce their hypocrisy and anti-nationalist propaganda.

Lord Linlithgow retired from Viceroyalty in October 1943 after holding that office for seven and half years, longer than any other Viceroy. He left India in the grips of a terrible famine which was mainly due to the Government's scorched earth policy in which estimated 3 to 4 million perished. Sapru remarked wryly, Linlithgow left India more divided than it was when he came. Lord Wavell, the commander in chief of India in 1942, succeeded him.

“In the name of God, I take this sacred oath, that to liberate India and the thirty eight crores of my countrymen, I, Subhas Chandra Bose, will continue this sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life”

The Saga of a Hero

Head of State

Major General A.C Chatterjee (Anil Chandra Chatterjee) in his memoirs India's Struggle for Freedom gives a vivid account of the Azad Hind under Netaji. After the initial arrangements in Singapore, Netaji went to Rangoon to celebrate the Burmese independence upon invite from Dr. Ba Maw, and met General Ida, commander in chief of the Imperial Japanese forces, Dr. and Mrs. Ba Maw, and Japanese Ambassador to Burma. Dr. Ba Maw promised all help and support to liberate India as they realized that without India's independence, Burmese independence was at risk. While in Rangoon Netaji took time to visit the tomb of Bahadur Shah, the last Mughal emperor as proclaimed by the Sipahi mutineers of 1857, who was extradited and spent his last days in exile in Burma. Netaji held a parade on 26th July 1943, of all the contingents of Indian National Army that were present in Rangoon. He said, "We express our unshakeable determination before a sacred memorial, before the mortal remains of the last fighter of India's freedom, the man who was an emperor among men and a man among emperors. Now when we are engaged in this last war of independence, it is all the more necessary for us to renew our unshakeable determination to fight this last war for independence, to a finish, regardless of all sufferings and sacrifices, regardless of all difficulties in our path." As a fitting tribute he repeated the poem written by the last emperor, "As long as the warriors have the determination, the sword of Hindustan will rule over London."

Great Famine of Bengal: Churchill's Secret War that killed millions

A terrible famine had begun in Bengal in March 1943. This was mainly owing to the scorched earth policy of Britain and also because of the colonial policies and the racial prejudice of Churchill. Historian Madhusree Mukerjee in her book Churchill's Secret War

estimates that 1.5 million to 3 million people perished in this man made famine. British government would, per, Lord Wavell, feed only those Indians who were "actually fighting or making munitions or working some particular railways". India produced 600,000 miles of cotton fabric for British interests during the war, Mukerjee writes. Because of the shortfall and inflation this caused within India, the poorest were reduced to covering themselves with scraps or going naked. Women would have to stay indoors all day waiting for others to return with the single piece of cloth the family possessed. Same thing happened during the first world war but at a smaller scale. British adopted a scorched earth policy to deny Japan access to food and transport should it invade Bengal, when Japan invaded and conquered Burma. Mukerjee attributes the "scorched earth" approach to Churchill, who reportedly urged it on 14 November 1941. The "rice denial" policy saw soldiers confiscate and destroy rice deemed surplus; according to one journalist, thousands of tons of rice were thrown into the water in East Bengal. The "boat denial" policy saw 46,000 boats able to carry more than ten passengers confiscated; bicycles, carts and elephants were also taken. One British civil servant said the policy "completely broke the economy of the fishing class" in Bengal. Only a despicable liar like Churchill could claim after the war that "No great portion of the world population was so effectively protected from the horrors and perils of the World War as were the peoples of Hindustan [India]. They were carried through the struggle on the shoulders of our small island." While Bengal starved, food rationing in Britain was unpopular: "In the end," Mukerjee writes, "it was not so much racism as the imbalance of power inherent in the social Darwinian pyramid that explains why famine could be tolerated in India while bread rationing was regarded as an intolerable deprivation in wartime Britain. (source: Wikipedia). The famine code was not even invoked by the colonial rulers, who were still smarting from the attacks on them in coastal Bengal, esp. they wanted to teach Medinipur a lesson for its patronage of the revolutionaries. External supplies of food were neither sought nor were allowed. Churchill disdainfully said, "let them die, they breed like rabbit anyway", about starving and dying Indians.

Subhas's magnanimity, Britain's meanness

Naturally this deliberate killing of his countrymen by his arch enemies deeply disturbed Subhas. He tried to send one hundred thousand tons of rice from Burma to Bengal but the British turned down his offer and worse, suppressed it from his countrymen. Bose said that he would guarantee safe conduct of the supply ships, if the British agreed to accept the delivery. Richard Tottenham mentioned in September 1943 that the plan of British Government was to discredit Subhas Bose in every possible way. Politics and vendetta were more important than the life of starving Indians to the "great" Britain.

Organizing the Government - Day to Day Operations and Activities: Netaji's personal involvement

After returning from Burma Netaji reorganized the Indian Independence League and gave the department of General Affairs and Finance to Lt. Col. A.C Chatterjee, Publicity and Propaganda to S.A Iyer, Education to John Thivy, Social Welfare, Housing and Transport to D.M Khan, Women's dept. to Lakshmi Swaminathan, Supplies to Hardayal Singh, Recruitment to B.M Pattanaik, Training to Lt. Col. Ehsan Qadir, Reconstruction to A.N Sarkar. All departments had their responsibilities defined and department of General Affairs provided the liaison and coordination across the departments. The recruitment department was responsible for the recruitment of volunteers for the Indian National Army, Azad Hind Dal and other umbrella organizations. Many training centers were opened to cater to the large number of volunteers who wanted to join Azad Hind. Training department provided a programme for training of the volunteers. A large volunteer training camp was established in Saleetar in Singapore. In the camps there were no separate kitchens for Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The volunteers took food together without distinction of caste or religion. Volunteers established kitchen garden and grew their own vegetables. For most of them this life was new. They also underwent all types of military training and discipline. The training was for a period of 6 months. Initially there were minor troubles owing to linguistic differences between the Tamils and the Hindi speaking population, but when Yellappa, chairman of the Indian Independence League, Singapore, took charge of the training camps, there was no further disturbance.

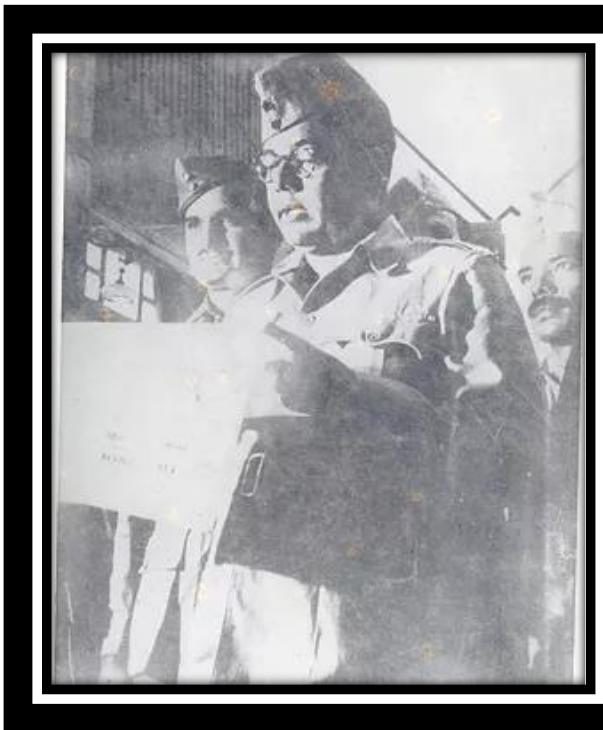
Each territorial committee of the Indian Independence League adopted for itself a badge for its executives. The emblem or insignia read "Ekta, Viswas, Validaan" or "Ittefaq, Itmad, Kurbani" or "Unit, Faith, Sacrifice". Netaji completely reorganized the Indian National Army. He abolished the Military Bureau and appointed Lt. Col. J.K Bhonsle as the Chief of Staff. He opened enlistment of civilian population for recruitment to the Indian National Army, revised scales of pocket allowances and increased the scale of rations for the troops. Before Netaji's arrival, Japanese had taken large number of Indians as workers in different parts of South East Asia for constructing roads, bridges, airfields and barracks. Netaji had asked his Japanese counterparts to bring the Indians back for the work of Azad Hind. Indian National Army was renamed as Azad Hind Fauj (India's Struggle for Freedom, Maj. Gen A.C Chatterjee). Supreme Headquarters contained the Supreme Commander Netaji, the Chief of Staff, and the Heads of the branches. Netaji did not assume any military rank. It was decided that Azad Hind Fauj

would carry out guerrilla warfare. They had to be extremely mobile and operate behind the enemy lines and maintain a close contact with the larger Japanese units. They would be lightly equipped. Gandhi regiment was under Col. I Kiani, Nehru regiment was under Col. Aziz Ahmed Khan, Azad regiment was under Col. Gulzara Singh. There were other groups such as Bahadur Group, Hind Field force, Intelligence Group, Reinforcement Group. Intelligence Group operated under Lt. Col. S.N Malik who later got Sardar-e-Jung. Intense training was provided on physical, military, educational (like language training) and spiritual (purpose of the battle and motivation of the forces). An officer's training school was established in Neesoon with Lt. Col. Habibur Rahman as the first officer commanding it. N.C.Os training camps were established along with volunteer training camps.

Netaji took a special interest in the training of all his men and women. He himself frequently inspected the troops, saw them under training in the parade ground and accompanied them in the maneuvers and the training for the jungle warfare. He went to their barracks, saw their living conditions and even tasted their food. These inspections were made at very short notices to see the actual day to day living conditions. It was his personal interest and love for them that had developed a deep bond of trust and affection and the soldiers were ready to lay down their lives for him. Japanese had also opened special service training centers for secret service work, for infiltration and intelligence work in India. They were opened in Rangoon and Penang. Penang one was later put under Major Swami who had been brought from Germany by Netaji. Dr. Pabitramohan Roy was one of the key secret service men who worked closely with Netaji. Lt. Col. Dr. Loganathan who later assumed the charge of the free Andaman Islands, was in charge of the medical units and he went to the different territories for recruitment of volunteers and for establishing training camps in Bangkok, Hong Kong and Shanghai. In Hong Kong a large number of Indian prisoners of war joined the Azad Hind. In Shanghai a large no. of policemen and their wives and daughters, mostly Sikhs, joined Azad Hind. The officer's corps had easy access to Netaji and often joined him for badminton matches. A warm camaraderie developed among soldiers from different religions, castes and linguistic backgrounds and they all dined together. Netaji picked forty five young men for training in Tokyo's elite Military Academy. He also selected ten among them for developing a future air force. He gave patronage to an Azad Hind orchestra and encouraged cultural programmes with patriotic fervours, like dramas and songs. INA orchestra created a set of inspiring songs (like Kadam Kadam) set to innovative tunes.

Bose worked very hard and slept hardly for three hours a day. Coffee and cigarettes were his mainstay during his night outs. He was up at the crack of the dawn with his rosary, and did his japam or daily prayers. A small pocket Gita and a Chandi (Bengali rendition of the Sri Sri Durga Saptashati in the Markandeya Purana - hymn of the Goddess Durga) were his constant companions. Ayer noted that Netaji never made a public display of his religion. It was to him intensely personal affair and he lived spirituality. He loved all animals except cats. He refused to discuss work over dinner and instead focused on culinary topics. He would often drive to Ramakrishna Mission in Singapore, changed from his military attire to silk dhoti and meditated for an hour or two in the shrine. Swami Bhaswarananda, president of the ashrama, and Brahmachari Kailasham were his intimate friends in the ashrama. He also donated about 50,000 dollars from his personal account for an orphanage established by the Ramakrishna Mission and participated in the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's birthday tithipuja.

During collection of funds drive, large sums of money were collected. At public gatherings, the garlands which were given to Netaji were auctioned for large sums and one Punjabi gentleman donated his entire wealth to get one of it. Milkmen from Bihar and UP donated even their cattle. An old woman who lived on begging, donated all that she had and Netaji did not have the heart to refuse her. With the help of the Indian Independence League at least three national schools were established for children and the adults. Hindustani was taught as a language, although Tamil and English were also given prominence keeping in view the large Tamil population. Brahmachari Kailasham gave his service for the school. In Kuala Lumpur a relief center was opened which gave relief to the vast majority of the labourers who had been thrown out of job owing to the closure of the plantations. Relief work raised contributions locally to meet the expenses and the credit went to the chairman Ram Chandra Naidu. Other centers across East and South East Asia, viz. Shanghai, Bangkok, Philippines, Java, Sumatra, Indo China, Tokyo, Siam contributed significantly by mobilization of resources, supply and supporter groups among Indian diaspora. Netaji visited Saigon in November 1943 and was enthusiastically received by the Indians, but French rulers did not like his presence. A Sindhi businessman donated a large sum to money of over hundred thousand dollars to Netaji and joined the Azad Hind Fauj.



Subhas's Azad Hind Government declares war on Britain. His Indian National Army gave the toughest fight to the British in the second world war. His soldiers loved and respected their Netaji who often used to share their meals and took every care of them personally



Subhas Chandra Bose as the head of state had to tour several countries in South east Asia, offering the hand of friendship and building a case for forging an alliance against the British. He was a diplomat per excellence



Subhas Chandra Bose took oath as the Head of the state for the Arzi Hukumat Azad Hind or Azad Hind Provisional Government on October 21, 1943. Two days later his Government, that was recognized by at least nine nations of the world, declared war on Britain and America

Formation of the Provincial Government - Arzi Hukumat e Azad Hind

21 October, 1943, a Red-Letter Day in the history of India, possibly the real day of her independence. On this day the proclamation of the formation of the provisional Azad Hind Government was made by Netaji in Singapore. Ayer had mentioned as to how Netaji wrote the proclamation. He worked through the night, "did not lift his eyes from the paper in front of him, silently handed to me (Ayer) the first page as soon as he finished it and I walked out of the room and sat at the typewriter. Abid and Swami went to his room and brought me the proclamation manuscript, sheet after sheet, as Netaji finished it." Never once did Netaji refer to any of his earlier sheets, not a single correction was necessary. Delegates from all over East Asia were summoned to Singapore. In the Cathay Hall, as Dr. R.C Majumdar puts, before an almost hysterical crowd who stormed the precincts of the Cathay Hall and presented indescribable scenes of overpowering feelings and emotions, Netaji read his famous Proclamation setting up the Provisional Government of Free India at Singapore. The duty of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) was thus described in the Proclamation: "It will be the task of the Provisional Government to launch and to conduct the struggle that

will bring about the expulsion of the British and of their allies from the soil of India. It will then be the task of the Provisional Government to bring about the establishment of a permanent National Government of Azad Hind constituted in accordance with the will of the Indian people and enjoying their confidence. After the British and their allies are overthrown and until a Permanent National Government of Azad Hind is set up on Indian soil, the Provisional Government will administer the affairs of the country in trust for the Indian people. The Proclamation ended with a passionate appeal: "In the name of God...we call upon the Indian people to rally round our banner and to strike for India's freedom. We call upon them to launch the final struggle against the British and all their allies in India and to prosecute that struggle with valour and perseverance and with full faith in final victory until the enemy is expelled from Indian soil and the Indian people are once again a free nation." Netaji was clearly inspired by the Irish proclamation of independence. "The provisional government is entitled to and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Indian. It guarantees religious liberty, as well as equal rights and equal opportunities to its citizens. It declares its firm resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation equally and transcending all the differences cunningly fostered by an alien Government in the past." Netaji became the Head of the State. He held the foreign affairs and the war portfolios. His voice choked with emotion as he took his oath in the name of God to continue his fight to liberate India and Indians till the last breath of his life. He allocated his cabinet portfolios by giving finance to A.C Chatterjee, publicity and propaganda to S.A. Ayer, and woman's affairs to Lakshmi Swaminathan. Eight representatives of the armed forces - Aziz Ahmed, N.s Bhagat, J.K Bhonsle, Gulzara Singh, M.Z Kiani, A.D Loganathan, Ehsan Qadir, and Shah Nawaz Khan were inducted in his cabinet. Ananda Mohan Sahay became cabinet secretary. Rashbehari Bose was designated as the Supreme Adviser and seven others including Karim Ghani, Debnath Das, Yellappa, John Thivy, Sardar Ishar Singh, A.N Sarkar, and D.M Khan were in the panel of advisers.

Azad Hind Government's effective administration

On 23 October the Provisional Government decided at a Cabinet meeting to declare war on Britain and U. S. A. The declaration was broadcast over Radio by Bose himself and San Francisco Radio communicated it to the world. "In a few days, nine world powers—Japan, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Burma, Thailand, Nationalist China, the Philippines and Manchuria—accorded their recognition to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. "On the 28th of October, Netaji flew to Tokyo where he attended the Greater East Asia Conference in the first week of November, and was received by the Japanese Emperor with all honours due to the Head of the State and

the Provisional Government of Free India. "At the Greater East Asia Conference, Premier Tojo announced on the 6th November, 1943, that Japan had decided to hand over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. Thus the Provisional Government acquired its first stretch of territory in Free India. "Returning to Singapore towards the end of December, after visiting China and the Philippines en route, Netaji left for the Andamans where he set foot on the first Free India territory on the 31st December, 1943. It was decided to rename the Andaman and Nicobar, 'Shahid' and 'Swaraj' Islands, respectively (History of Freedom Movement of India, Vol 3, R.C Majumdar). On the declaration of its formation in occupied Singapore the Irish Nationalist leader De Valera, a personal friend of Bose, sent a congratulatory note.

On 22 October, 1943, preparations were complete for the formal opening of the training camp of Rani Jhansi regiment in Waterloo street, Singapore. Netaji addressed the gathering and reminded them what women could achieve. He told them how women had contributed to the independence and the revolutionary movements in India and also on the life and ideals of Rani of Jhansi, that she was the best and the bravest even according to her enemy. The women were greatly excited to be part of the journey. The maximum strength of the regiment in Singapore was around five hundred. A certain number of Ranis were trained in nursing in the hospital at Bidadari in Singapore. The nurses played a very vital role when they were stationed in Burma and served in the Base and Advanced Base hospitals in Rangoon, Mandalay and Maymyo.

Bose's decision to declare a war against United States was not uncontested. Loganathan had asked him politely the reason, "Why America Sir?". But Bose argued that the presence of Americans on Indian soil was a reality that would make the INA's task of defeating the British very difficult. He had a point as later events would prove. United States did barely nothing to put pressure on British to accede to India's demand for independence. US did nothing to help the Indians starving in Bengal and silently condoned the mass murder. United States' hypocrisy was evident since they did not participate in the war despite the massacre of the Jews until Pearl Harbour was attacked and their own interests compromised. On 23rd October Bose publicly declared in a huge mass rally in which Azad Hind Fauj also took part, his decision to wage a war against the British and American forces. People wholeheartedly ratified the decision. Major General A.C Chatterjee recalled the power which Netaji exercised over the audience. Swami Bhaswarananda confirmed the same in his reminiscences and opined that a divine power seemed to have descended on Netaji in the way he could mesmerize and influence people during the Azad Hind Government days.

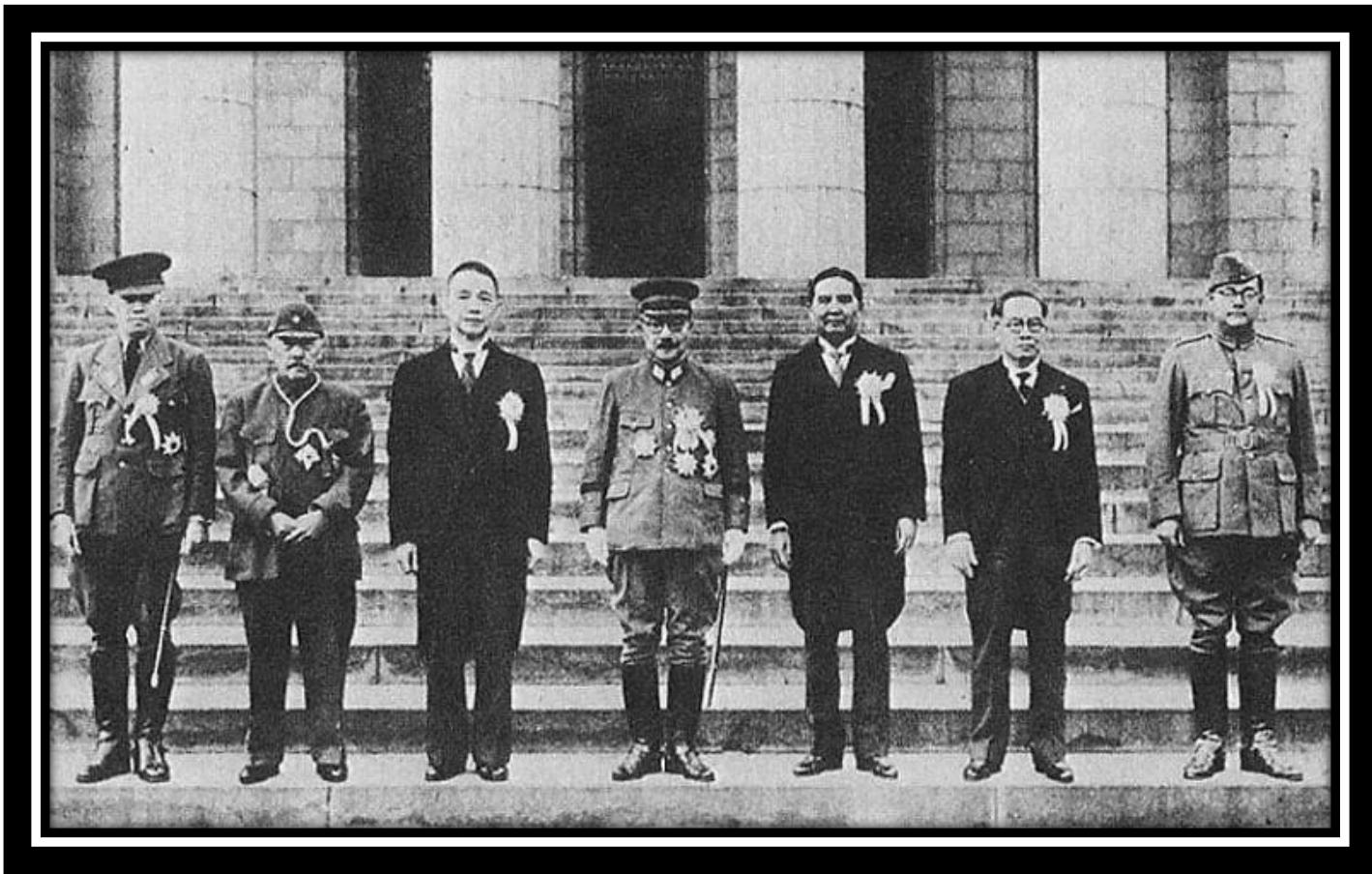
Netaji also felt the need for his Government possessing territory as a mark of legitimacy. He had made a declaration of setting foot upon Indian soil before the end of the year and the capture of Andaman and Nicobar Islands gave him that opportunity to fulfill his promise. Provisional Government also gave the option of accepting the Indian citizenship anywhere in South East Asia after signing an oath of allegiance. Provisional Government also created several subcommittees - 1) National Planning Sub Committee that decided on a common language, the Hindustani, with Roman alphabet, common dress, common mode of address, that was Jai Hind 2) Decoration and Medal Subcommittee deciding on the bravery awards like Sher-e-Hind or Sardar-e-Jung 3) Pay, allowances and pensions subcommittee, which also took up the matter of looking after soldiers and civilians who would die or become disabled owing to the battle or diseases. In November 1943, decisions were taken on the contentious issues of the flag and the songs. Tri Colour without Charkha was adopted as the flag while *Subh Sukh Chain ki Barkha Barshe*, composed by Hussain, was accepted as the national song, based on Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana*. Netaji rewarded Hussain with ten thousand dollars for this rendition. Netaji had requested the Chettiar temple trustees for contribution to the Azad Hind Government funds. When they insisted that he come down to the temple, he agreed to go only on condition of allowing all his officers, irrespective of religion and caste. The temple authorities agreed to this revolutionary step and his officers from all religious background were even allowed in the inner sanctum sanctorum. They were also offered Tilaka and prasadam. Hindus and Muslims of his government celebrated each other's festivals and took part in each other's joys.

Raising of money had been a contentious issue. Though donations came pouring in from rich and poor they were not sufficient for war efforts. Netaji had to issue threats to certain rich merchants who were unwilling to part with their wealth. He said to the merchants of Malaya on October 25, "Legally speaking there is no private property when a country is in a state of war...if you think that your wealth and possessions are your own, you are living in delusion; Your lives and your properties do not now belong to you; they belong to India and India alone" (Dr. R.C Majumdar, History of Freedom Movement of India, Vol 3). Indian Independence League Fund Committees were set up in the Branches and Sub-Banches, with a Central Board of Management to control and direct them, and to issue final receipts to contributors. A form of assessment of taxes was adopted which was a sliding scale of percentage of total wealth. At the Board meetings, rules and regulations were passed, in accordance with the policy of the Movement and the representations that were made from time to time. The basis of valuation of properties, both movable and immovable, were fixed by the Board. A businessman originally from Dhoraji town of Saurashtra, Memon Abdul Habeeb Yusuf

Marfani, donated almost his entire fortune of Rs 1 crore to the Indian National Army. He was duly honoured and decorated by Netaji as a recognition of his patriotism and spirit of renunciation.

Publicity and propaganda department worked very hard to prepare pamphlets and leaflets in different languages. 21st of each month would be regarded as the Provisional Government of Free India Day and flags would be hoisted in every house and public meetings were to be held. 26th January was treated as Independence Day and Mahatma Gandhi's birthday was celebrated. Provisional Government took over broadcasting stations in Singapore, Saigon, Bangkok and Rangoon, and started one in Tokyo.

Azad Hind bank was established in April 1944 in Burma and Singapore with Debnath Das as the chairman. Currencies of Azad Hind were printed and became the instruments of transaction. Azad Hind Government became fully functional in six months and even managed to get its own territory. Now was the time to set eyes on the promised march to India.



Greater East Asia Conference - Netaji in extreme right and Tojo in the center, with the Asian leaders. Image Source: Wikipedia

Trip to Japan and East Asia

In November 1943, Netaji received invitation from the Imperial Japanese Government to take part in the Greater East Asia Conference to be held in Tokyo. Netaji agreed to accept the invitation as an observer. Major General Chatterjee writes that, before Netaji went to Tokyo he made it clear to the Japanese Government that he would attend the conference but would not commit himself in any way on behalf of his country. He went to Tokyo accompanied by Major General J.K Bhonsle, S.A Iyer, A.M Sahay and Major Abid Hasan. Key participants were the Empire of Manchukuo, National Government of China, Philippines, Siam, Burma, and Japan, apart from the Provisional Azad Hind Government. Netaji had expressed his displeasure with the liaison agency Hikari Kikan and the attitudes of the Japanese military officers in South East Asia. He demanded full control of the intelligence operatives to be sent to India. He wanted to deploy the first division of INA in the Indian offensive and asked Japan to handover the Andaman and

Nicobar Islands to the provisional Government. He also sought acknowledgement of his Government's rights to issue currency and exercise jurisdiction over abandoned Indian properties all over South East Asia. Tojo yielded on the political and economic demands and promised to discuss the military ones (Prof. Sugato Bose - His Majesty's Opponent). Bose spoke on the second day of the five day conference for twenty minutes and impressed everybody with his eloquence, vast subject matter knowledge and deep analysis of the prevailing situations. Three cardinal principles were agreed by all nations concerned that would govern their mutual dealings. They would be Freedom, Justice and Reciprocity. Tojo reiterated his full support to India's independence and announced his intentions to transfer the sovereignty of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the provisional Government. Tojo in a speech had said that Netaji would be the all in all in free India. But Netaji objected and told him that he was only a humble servant and it was for the people of India to decide who would be their leader. He entreated General Sugiyama to consider INA as an allied army and to accept his plans regarding the second and the third divisions of INA. Bose also placed requests for equipment to build a navy and an air force. He regarded the Japanese support as loans to be repaid after independence. He also held a mass meeting in Tokyo. On November 18, 1943, Netaji went to occupied Nanjing in China at the invitation of the pro Japanese Chinese leadership. He wanted to communicate with the Chungking Government of Chiang Kai Shek. He paid homage to Sun Yat-Sen. He appealed to the Chungking Government not to send troops to India to fight for the British. Netaji went through a second round of visits in East Asia, notably Jakarta, Surabaya in Java, and Borneo and Sumatra, in order to garner the support of the Indians.

The Andamans and its association with the Revolutionaries

As promised by Tojo, Andaman and Nicobar Islands were handed over to the Azad Hind Government but Japan did not relinquish its military control, owing to the strategic nature of the islands as a naval base on the Bay of Bengal. Accompanied by Anand Mohan Sahay and Abid Hasan, Netaji visited the Port Blair in the Andamans on December 29. As per S. A. Ayer in the book The Story of I.N.A, the date was 31 December, 1943. One of the hallmarks was his visit to the Cellular jail, the small narrow constrained cells in which the British, along with dreadful murderers, had imprisoned many illustrious sons of India who fought for independence. This was the jail where the convicts of Alipore Bomb case, including Aurobindo's own brother Barindra, were imprisoned. This was the jail where the dreaded demonic Jailer David Barry's tortures led to the suicide of a young revolutionary Indu Bhushan Roy and drove Ullaskar Datta to insanity. This was the jail where Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the

erstwhile revolutionary turned Hindu Mahasabha leader, had spent roughly 11 years. His brother Ganesh Savarkar also interned here. Other noted inmates included Biplobi Trailokya Nath Chakrabarty Maharaj, convicts from 1914 revolution, esp. from that of Ghadar party, that included Chattar Singh who was suspended in an iron suit for three years, Baba Bhan Singh, who was killed by Barry's men, Sachindranath Sanyal, the righthand man of Rashbehari Bose, and Bhai Paramanand. Many freedom fighters were hanged in the jail premises. Several were killed during a hunger strike while force feeding them with milk, in the most brutal manner that defies imagination. Those who were killed during 1933 force feeding program included Mohan Kishore and Mohit Moitro.

The Jail was a stark reminder of the British atrocities, the darkest chapters of the Raj. In 1939, because of the repeated appeals of eminent people, esp. Tagore, the Government repatriated the political inmates, and in two years Japan occupied the island. The Indian residents extended a hearty welcome to Netaji. The Indian National Flag was hoisted as a symbol of Indian sovereignty in the Gymkhana grounds in Port Blair. Netaji renamed the islands as Shaheed and Swaraj. In 2018, to commemorate the incident, Indian Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi, renamed Ross island as Subhas Dweep, Neil island as Shaheed Dweep and Havelock as Swaraj Dweep. Netaji appointed Dr. A.D Loganathan as the Chief Commissioner of the islands. The latter with his staff proceeded there and took formally the charge.



Netaji inspecting the Cellular Jail in Andamans. Image courtesy Creative Commons

“Brothers and Sisters! We assure you that we shall fulfill our promise”

Uniqueness – Ideal Leader

Ayer also gives a description of the domestic life of Netaji in Singapore, his traits and his daily routine in his book "Unto Him a Witness". Netaji used to stay in a seaside Bungalow. "Usually, he was a late riser, because he invariably retired very late, and then read political and religious books in bed till the early hours of the morning. He rose any minute after six but never later than seven in the morning, had his bath and always breakfasted in his bed-cum-office room by 8-00 a.m. The breakfast consisted of a couple of half-boiled eggs and two or three cups of tea, which he enjoyed at all hours, between morning and evening. Colonel Raju, his personal physician, who was also staying on the same floor, in the room opposite to mine (Ayer's), used to say how difficult he found it to "manage" Netaji. " Always excess," Raju used to say", implying of his habits to munch extra supari or smoke excessively or play many rounds of badminton. A few mornings he took some Ayurvedic medicine with honey. Ayer continues, "If after breakfast, no callers were expected, Netaji would drive first to the IIL Headquarters and carry on till about 11-00 a.m. or midday, then drop in at the Supreme Command Headquarters for an hour or so; in between, tea would be sent for and he would gulp down several cups of it at both places. It was not unusual for him to forget all about his Lunch; not so his personal staff. But he was always thoughtful and considerate; and insisted on their taking tea too whenever he had it. But then. Colonel Raju and A.D.Cs. Rawat and Shamshere Singh would rather have a morsel of rice and curry than pots of tea. Back home about 2-00 p.m. Netaji and Staff would sit down for a rather late lunch." The lunch was inevitably simple - Plain boiled rice, thin dal, plain-cooked vegetables, a saucer of dahi (curds) and a banana, ending up with a cup of good coffee. Kali was his loyal and faithful table boy in lunch table and never would one day pass when Netaji would not be cracking a joke with Kali on the prices of the banana. Kundan Singh was his faithful valet.

Writes Ayer in "Unto Him a Witness", "At any meal, particularly if he had a number of guests, Netaji had something very interesting and amusing to say about food. He avoided serious talk as far as possible. He wanted his guests, who sometimes included

very junior INA officers or IIL, officials, to feel quite at home at table with him. Netaji used to crack jokes and laugh a lot even during hard times. He never showed his disappointment with debacles.

After lunch, he would go and sit in the drawing room to have another smoke to be followed by forty winks of sleep, if nobody had come to lunch or was waiting downstairs by appointment. In any event callers would begin coming from 3-00 p.m. onwards and the interviews would go on non-stop till nearly dusk. Then Netaji would send word to us in our rooms to get ready for badminton, and we would play till it was absolutely impossible to see the shuttlecock in the dark.

After a bath, Netaji would come down for dinner about 8-00 p.m. This was a more leisurely meal which Netaji would eat very well and enjoy every morsel of. At least two helpings if fish was really good, plenty of pooris with dal, followed by a plateful of rice with curry, one more helping of rice if the curry was very good, followed by some sweets.

Coffee would go round. Then we could tell how soon or late Netaji wished to go to bed that night. If he ordered more coffee to be sent up to his room sometime after dinner, then it was to be practically an all-night affair going through important papers, taking important decisions, writing letters.

When he was free for a while in the evening and did not fancy badminton, he would go round the grounds of the house and visit his pets—two monkeys, two goats, two rabbits, three or four ducks and geese, and a tonga pony.

One of the monkeys was named Ramu and the other Sita. He was very fond of Ramu, and Ramu was equally fond of Netaji.

The other pets really belonged to Colonel Raju who started collecting the menagerie patiently. Having seen them during his walk round the house for a few days, Netaji started liking them too. He would go to each of them and feed them with his own hand." Netaji however disliked cats and Abid Hasan had a few such pets who used to loiter around.

Ayer also recalls Netaji's penchant for making fun of even extremely difficult and troublesome situations. One night in April 1945 – Major Swami and Ayer was called to his room, and he said to them, "Italy gone, then Germany, then Japan. Which other

world power shall we turn to next? What about turning to Russia? " He was also amused by the constant anti Bose propaganda of the BBC and the All India Radio (AIR). Ayer narrates one more incident, "Netaji always had a hearty laugh against himself whenever he heard the AIR say: " Subhas Bose will now think up some ingenious excuse for his failure to bring about a revolution inside India, and he will go on bluffing the Japanese." It would so happen that some high-ranking Japanese would be sitting with Netaji at that very moment."

Ayer also recalled another vital aspect of Netaji, of on the previous night of forming the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, he wrote pages after pages of his speech and gave them for typing to Ayer. Ayer writes, "What amazed me was that he never even once wanted to see any of the earlier pages that he had written. How he could remember every word that he had written in the preceding pages, how he could remember' the sequence, the paragraphs. In the entire script there was not one word corrected or scored out, and the punctuation was complete. That he wrote out the whole proclamation sheet after sheet, without a break and at one sitting was some measure of Netaji's clear thinking, remarkable memory and grasp and facile pen ! The entire historic proclamation was written with the ease with which a brief letter could be penned."

Ayer summed up Netaji's characteristics as, "Probably the most outstanding and admirable aspect of Netaji, the fighter, was his capacity to go on fighting—and fighting—in the face of defeats and disappointments." He gave examples after examples of the indomitable spirit of Netaji. After the desertion of the five officers of the INA to the British Army, Netaji was disappointed. He also sprained his hip during an exercise and was bed ridden for about a week. Once he got a little better, he called for a meeting of about thousand men of INA and spoke for about four hours to them on the betrayal. He asked the men to shoot any officer betraying them, ordered for the celebration of anti-traitor's day and turned the whole incident around in such a way that the morale of the troops, instead of going down, went up a few notches. After the vicious carpet bombing of the hospital in Myang on 10th February 1945, Netaji, still recovering from the hip muscle sprain, on hearing the news, immediately sent his adjutants Major Rawat and Major Swami, to check the condition of the patients and the staff. The hospital was completely burnt by using incendiary bombs. A large number of patients had been killed on the spot, and most of the rest had sustained severe burns and were transferred to the General Hospital. Netaji, despite doctor's advice and at great risk to his own health, went to the General Hospital to check the condition of his soldiers, talk to them personally and attend to their needs, two or three times a day.

Ayer thought that the "title of Supreme Commander, if it truly fitted any commander on the battlefields of Europe or Asia, fitted Netaji most superbly. He looked supreme, every inch of him." He used to address his soldiers as "*sathiyon aur doston*", literally comrades and friends. He mesmerized his soldiers by his own personality, charm, magnanimity and personal warmth. He told them to stay out of the battlefield if they had even the slightest doubt for the cause that they were fighting for or if they were afraid. His men knew that he meant every word that he spoke. He was sincere and for the first time they had a leader, the Supreme Commander, who was so frank and brutally honest with them so as to offer nothing but hunger, death and deprivation in return for their service. Probably this motivated his retreating Azad Hind men to live on absolutely nothing but jungle grass, and yet not even thinking of deserting or surrendering to the enemy. Often most unexpectedly he would drive into one of the camps of his soldiers and would walk into the kitchen, taste the food, assess the hygienic condition, and go to the dining hall to sit with the men on the ground and eat with them, as one of them. His men, most naturally, appreciated these gestures. He had a flair for the details. He knew the exact quantity of the rations for each and every item served to his soldiers and thus ensured complete accountability.

Netaji was also an ideal for the Asian leaders in his matter of dealing with Japanese leadership. Dr. Jose Laurel (President of the Philippines) and Dr. Ba Maw (Head of the State, Independent Burma), were both appreciative of the way Netaji handled his Japanese counterparts. He stood firm on the matters of principles. The Japanese highest leadership was appreciative of him and understood him, but not so the lesser leaders in South East Asia and in the Tokyo Head Quarters.

Netaji also had to tread very cautiously on the issue of carrying out his Government on the soil of independent Burma as there were risks of frictions. Even though Adipadi Ba Maw was favourably disposed towards his leadership, in later days that relationship was strained on account of several factors. The Azad Hind Government was solely responsible for the Indians on the Burmese soil. The Provisional Government had to recruit, carry out demonstrations and parades, celebrations, events, collect money and materials, but had to be careful of not breaking any sovereign rights of the Burmese. During the wartime, while the entire Burma was suffering from acute shortage of essential materials, the relative affluence of Azad Hind functionaries and people must have alienated a section of the locals. Burmese Government had a precarious financial condition while Azad Hind Government could collect enough money from the Indians living in Burma to carry out their functions. Dr. Ba Maw was very sensitive on this aspect

of violation of sovereign rights and reacted to even minor transgressions. There were also mischief mongers who worked for endangering the relationship between the Azad Hind and the Burmese Governments. Sixteen fateful months of Indo-Burman collaboration on the soil of Free Burma, started off in an atmosphere of cordiality. Netaji and Dr. Ba Maw exchanged courtesies, and put the leading members of their Governments and armies in touch with each other so as to ensure the smooth achievement of practical day-to-day co-operation between the two Organizations. However as days went by, "Total Mobilization" by Azad Hind government ensured free flow of resources and relative prosperity of the people under the Provisional Government and people began comparing between the dynamism of Netaji as against that of Ba Maw whose own people were suffering much from the absence of resources. Ayer writes in *Unto Him a Witness*, "Great warmth and cordiality marked the relations between General Aung San and Thakin Nu on the one hand and Netaji on the other. They made no secret of their admiration for the Indian patriot who was marshaling a liberation army against heavy odds, and whom they wished all luck. Netaji loved them both very deeply and held them up to the INA as models of resurgent youth reaching the top of the ladder in the National Administration."

Netaji had demonstrated his organizational and leadership quality by developing a well functioning Government within an astonishingly short period of time. He had a grasp for the details and could discuss on any topic that would be relevant for the Government and people, including manufacturing of essential items, and at the same time he could formulate lofty visions for his Army, Government and free India. Ayer sums it up, "With equal ease, he could discuss with Tojo the transfer of Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Free India Government; and with his own Divisional Commander, the operations going on, on the eight sectors of the Burma-India front; with Dr. Ba Maw the highly complicated political situation in Burma ; with Wang Ching Wei, the intricate problems of Nanking vis-a-vis Chungking; with President Jose de Laurel of the Philippines, the Filipinos' differences with the Japanese; and with the tonga driver in the League Headquarters the price of gram and grass for the horse. No detail was too small for him, and no man was too unimportant. He had a place in his head few every matter and a place in his heart for every man." The concept and the formulation of the Rani of Jhansi brigade itself was a testimony to the farsightedness. The brigade, which freed up the women and put them on equal pedestal to their brothers, set a shining example to all South East Asian women to demand equal and fair treatment. It brought a cultural and social revolution among Indians and South East Asians. The patriotism, courage and self-reliance that fired these girls, inspired others as well and therefore it was little surprising that Azad Hind forces never suffered from lack of volunteers, particularly from

that of the youth. The Bal Senas was another revolutionary concept whereby young boys and girls between ages of nine and fourteen were given military training. One of them, Indira, daughter of Mr. P.G Nair, was much liked by Netaji and had entertained the soldiers in the camps by her music and dances. After the fall of Mandalay, the intrepid Bal Sena volunteers openly flouted the order of the British Government of banning greetings of "Jai Hind" and slogans of "Netaji ki Jai". They simply shouted the slogans publicly and bolted, without giving any opportunity of ever getting caught.

G.S Dhillon remembered how Netaji treated Shaukat Malik, who in an inebriated state in a state banquet to honour INA victory in Manipur, in presence of dignitaries like Dr. Ba Maw, had exclaimed, "Netaji, Netaji my foot. I hoisted the Tri Color in Moirang." In the morning when Shaukat Malik had come to his senses he was extremely repentant. He met Netaji in the latter's residence, and requested Netaji to punish him severely. Netaji merely gave him an affectionate pat and approved him two weeks of paid leave to Bangkok to recover from the trauma of the battles. Shaukat narrated the incident to G.S Dhillon and expressed his love and admiration for Netaji.

Pabitramohan Roy in his diary mentions that "Netaji never belittled himself before the Japanese. He did not tolerate slightest disrespect towards the Indians. He said that India would never be free if the Japanese were considered greater than the Indians."

Ayer mentions emphatically, "It was his intense spiritual faith that gave him poise, tranquility, quiet strength, infectious self-confidence, tolerance, charitability, natural humility and, most important of all, a touching and overpowering spirit of humanity." "Sannyasi (ascetic) was writ large on his forehead even when the Supreme Commander's cap rested majestically." Ayer states, and this is corroborated by the reminiscences of Swami Bhaswarananda, president of the Ramakrishna Mission Singapore during that period, that while in Singapore, many nights after dinner, Netaji used to send his car to the Ramakrishna Mission to fetch Swami Bhaswarananda or his associate Brahmachari Kailasham and spend time with them in spiritual talks before retiring to his study after midnight. Or late at night he used to drive to Ramakrishna Mission, went to the temple, changed his attire into a silk dhoti and shut himself up in the prayer room with his rosary, and spent a couple of hours in meditation. His tiny little leather bag contained a Bhagavat Gita and a copy of the Chandi (the glory of the Goddess Durga in Bengali), his small rosary of beads (tulsi) and his reading glasses.

According to Swami Bhaswarananda, he first met Netaji after Vijaya Dashami in 1943 (sacred day of the end of the ten day worship of the Goddess Durga) when he was

called in his residence in the evening. Netaji had respectfully touched his feet and invited him for a dinner. After that they had regular spiritual discussions. Netaji had an intimate relationship with Ramakrishna Order. He was inspired by the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna, the saint of the nineteenth century Bengal, and his chief disciple Swami Vivekananda, the founder of the Order. He was known to Swami Brahmananda, the first President of the Order and a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, whom he met in the Varanasi Sevashrama. In 1938, Swami Abhedananda, another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, had called upon him, embraced him and blessed him to become victorious. Swami Bhaswarananda remembers that the night before he left Singapore forever, Netaji came to the temple of Sri Ramakrishna and meditated for a long time. It is little known to the world at large that Subhas Bose had been initiated in Kriyayoga by Barada Charan Majumdar, a master Yogi.

Netaji's intimate friend Dilip Kumar Roy, saw the mystic and the Yogi in him. He said that in the great turbulent life full of work, this spiritual nature of Subhas was possibly hidden. In a letter to his friend Dilip, Subhas had admitted that he believed in the power of the mantra after reading the Tantrik philosophy, and was fascinated by the tranquil Yogi Shiva as well as the mother Goddess Kali. Dilip had correctly summed up that Subhas could never be a hypocrite. When Subhas said that he would not accept defeat under any circumstance, it was not an empty boast. He could not and would not compromise on the matters of principles. Subhas never wanted to impose himself or his opinions on others. He did not want to administer or tried to rule over people. He respected every person and gave enough freedom to everybody. He believed in righteousness and his heart was full of kindness and empathy. Therefore he never thought that only his opinions would matter over that of the others.

His erstwhile colleague and admirer Hari Vishnu Kamath had said in his reminiscences, "From his early boyhood when Subhas Chandra Bose journeyed alone to the Himalayas in search of personal salvation, up to the years of his mature manhood when he traveled to distant lands in search of national salvation, his life was all of one pattern: the life of a Grand Rebel whom the pathetic subjection of this ancient land turned into an uncompromising political revolutionary. He was not a mere political; he regarded his life as a complete dedication to a sublime Cause rooted in spiritual reality."

Subhas Chandra Bose renounced his life and material desires for the cause of Indian Independence. As Sri Krishna pointed out in Gita - "*Yah tu karma phala tyagi sah tyagi iti abhidhiyate.*" - One who gives up all fruits of his actions (and not actions per se) is regarded as a renunciate. That definition aptly fits Subhas Chandra Bose. That was his

real nature and character, his uniqueness among all political leaders and revolutionaries of the world. His fight for freedom was the yearning of the human soul for the eternal freedom from the bondage of the world and to go back to its source of Infinite Bliss, the fountain of joy. Like a true leader he taught his country that freedom comes at a price and that freedom is eternal which comes in exchange for the supreme sacrifice of all that is held dear in the materialistic world. He was a sannyasi first and a leader next.

Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, the great scholar, who was in Presidency when Subhas was studying there, noted that Subhas was misunderstood by great many people including patriots when he proposed the Roman script as the national script of India in place of the Devnagari. In fact it was Prof. Chatterjee who had introduced Subhas to the relevance of the Roman script in Indian context. He opined that Subhas's support of the Roman script knowing fully well the popular sentiment against the foreign alphabet, "demonstrates some noteworthy traits in Subhas's character - his openness to ideas, his prompt advocacy of what he thought was right, and his solicitude for the unity and the welfare of his people."

Years later Dr. Ba Maw told the following. "I often have my mystical moments", Bose once told me, "when I would like to give up everything and spend my life in prayer and meditation. But I must wait till India is liberated." Again, when someone laughingly asked him when he intended to get married, he laughed back and replied, "As soon as India is free." (extract from www.drbamawlibrary.org)

Fujiwara's first impressions about Bose was, "He was effusive in his greetings as if he was welcoming an old friend. In his appearance I saw the nobleness of a philosopher, a steely will, a passionate fighting spirit, and great wisdom and refinement. In first glance he appeared to me a man of extra ordinary ability." Netaji extended greetings with Kunomara first and then he walked towards Fujiwara and shook his hands firmly. "As he gave me a cordial look of profound appreciation and his voice spoke my name, I felt his warmth running through my body like an electric wave. He embraced me and invited me to sit on a sofa as if he would carry me there. My old INA officers gathering around us watched me with deep emotion."

Prem Kumar Sahgal was impressed by Netaji's infinite knowledge of the military affairs, despite he being a civilian and not an army man. Sahgal also recalled Netaji's courtesy that he extended to all and sundry. His lovable manners made everybody feel at home. He had a frank and informal way of dealing with people. Netaji had an absolute faith in the final victory of India. Whenever he spoke about India, he would become extremely

sentimental. Sahgal remembered that in a meeting with German and Japanese military attaches, everybody listened to Netaji and his interpretation of the war with rapt attention. They were hypnotized by Bose's masterly analysis of the military affairs.

G. S Dhillon recollected how Netaji had worked for hours together without any sleep and would still be able to display superhuman ability and zeal.

Sahgal also recollected that when Netaji began to speak on 21st October, 1943, words did not come out. Instead tears started flowing from his eyes. Sahgal said that it was the most touching scene that he had ever seen in his life. Netaji behaved in the kindest and most brotherly way to any woman. He would immediately attend to any woman who would come to meet him. He had a loving and affectionate nature with children, he loved playing with them. This is also corroborated by the reminiscences of the nephews and nieces of Netaji.

“I assure you that I shall be with you in darkness and in sunshine, in sorrow and in joy, in suffering and in victory”

Rani of Jhansi Regiment



Netaji accepting a Guard of Honour from the woman army called Jhansi Rani Regiment. This all woman unit was his brainchild and despite the opposition from the Japanese he built up a professional fighting force and a nursing unit with the Indian women of South of East. The Regiment was led by Captain Dr. Lakshmi Swaminathan. In the photo Lakshmi is seen to the left of Netaji

When the Provisional Government of Azad Hind was formed on 21st October 1943, Dr. Lakshmi Swaminathan was appointed as the minister for women's affairs. Subhas, sometimes back, also had asked her to raise a regiment of women to fight alongside men. The idea of women's regiment was there with Bose who held women with high esteem. He was particularly impressed by the fighting spirit displayed by women of caliber like the queen of Jhansi Rani Manikarnika or Lakshmi Bai who had rode to fight the British when they conspired to rob her of her kingdom after her husband's death, by the Doctrine of Lapse proclamation. Her heroism during the 1857 mutiny had earned her the respect of friends and foes alike. To fight against men in open battlefield and hold her ground against an impossibility would make her immortal forever. It is her spirit that Netaji invoked when he decided to form a regiment by the women and for the women of India.

Being a devotee of mother Goddess Durga Kali and he was extremely respectful of women like her mother Prabhavati Devi, Basanti Devi, Kasturba Gandhi, his sister in law Bibhavati Devi and the women freedom fighters and revolutionaries of India. The idea of a woman's regiment may have come to him as and when he had begun to dream of raising an army to fight for India's independence. He discussed this idea openly for the first time with Abid Hasan during the submarine journey. He broached this subject during the mass rally in Padang, Singapore, on 9th July, when he mentioned that every able bodied man must join the war of independence and there must be a place for women in that army. "This must be a truly revolutionary army... I am appealing also to women... women must be prepared to fight for their freedom and for independence... along with independence they will get their own emancipation." He had said.

Lakshmi and Yellappa had planned to offer a guard of honour to Netaji with only women volunteers dressed as a soldier. Lakshmi discussed the plan with Mrs. Chidambaram, chairman of the women's section of the Indian Independence League, for identifying girls who would participate. For the guard of honour Lakshmi could get twenty volunteers who wore saris and were made to carry British .303 rifles (Peter Fay - The Forgotten Army). They drilled for three hours in the afternoon and three hours next day morning and presented the Guard of Honour to Bose on Monday afternoon. Bose was impressed.

John Thivy, the chairman of the Ipoh branch of IIL, made it possible for Lakshmi to meet Bose. Subhas met him in the evening. He knew his mother, Ammu Swaminathan, an aspiring politician and Congress member in South India and Lakshmi was a well known figure in Singapore. Subhas Bose had warned Lakshmi about the enormity of the job

she was about to undertake, as his plan for the RJR was to send the regiment to fight in the jungles of Burma against the allied forces.

Lakshmi began with the fifteen among the twenty women who had presented the Guard of Honour, who were ready to join. Many more volunteers were recruited and trained over a period of time. Instructors from INA helped in the drill exercise in groups of fifteen. The undertaking was not readily accepted by the local Japanese military. When Bose returned from his tour of East Asia to Singapore in August, he himself went about the recruitment and a prize catch was Janaki Davar from Kua La Lumpur. Janaki came to hear Netaji's speech. When Bose had asked for total mobilization, Janaki, then seventeen year old, offered her ear rings. Lakshmi came to her house to meet her family and could convince her father to allow her to join the regiment. Her sister Papathy also joined and other Indian girls of Malaya soon followed her footsteps. A camp of the RJR had been formed in a building that belonged to the League. A tailor was recruited to make uniforms for the Ranis. Lakshmi recalls, "We all huddled in one room and slept on the floor. The kitchens were not ready, so food was brought in from one of the INA camps."

On 22nd October the regimental camp was formally opened. The above picture that shows Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose inspecting guard of honour, was on this occasion. Lakshmi is seen walking at the Supreme Commander's right. Bose addressed the women and encouraged them in their fight. On this day there were about 156 women in the Regiment. The regiment and its training were a spectacle for the foreign journalists, esp. the Japanese one, who were unacquainted with the image of a fighting force of women. They had covered it extensively in their magazines. This was probably the first of its kind of regiment in Asia. China had women in military, in the combat as well as non combat roles. However it is not likely that they had a dedicated woman's regiment. Other Asian and even European nations did not have women in the army. So the concept was revolutionary and it showed women of Asia the light of emancipation from their mundane domestic chores and placed them on equal footing with men, earning them respect and giving them self-worth.

Women have been already participating in the Indian Nationalist Movement. There were women who had assumed inspiring leadership roles like Rani Bhabani, Rani Rasmoni and Rani Bhabashankari of Bengal, Rani Ahalyabai Holkar, who were pious and yet strong enough to resist. There were fighters too - Queen Abbakka who fought bravely the Portuguese, Kittur Chennamma, who like Lakshmi Bai fought against the British, Velu Nachiyar, who was one of the first to fight the East India Company, and

Rani Avanti Bai, a contemporary of Lakshmi Bai. There were Rani Durgavati of Gondwana, Rani Padmini of Chittore who had become symbols of resistance against Islamic invasions. In Bengal particularly a large no. of women joined the Nationalist movement, notable figures included Dukaribala Devi, "Pishima" Nanibala Devi who actively helped the Jugantar revolutionary group and was tortured in the most inhuman way by the British police, Sindhulala, Leela Nag - founder of Deepali Sangha, and a long time associate of Subhas Bose, Kamala Dasgupta, Bina Das who shot Governor Stanley Jackson, Shanti and Suniti who shot magistrate Stevens, Shantisudha Ghosh, Ujjwala Majumdar, associates of Surjyo Sen like Preetilata and Kalpana and many more. Many women joined the satygrahis, participated in picketing activities and went to the jail during the Civil Disobedience Movement. There was a larger participation of women in the Quit India Movement - Matangini Hazra, respectfully known as the Old Lady Gandhi, of Medinipur, was shot dead when she was leading a peaceful march. Therefore it is not surprising that Subhas Bose, who was a key leader and architect of the Nationalist movement, would want women to form its own army and attack the British. He even promised that when the INA marched to Calcutta, the RJR would be in the forefront. Perhaps the formation of RJR was a key strategic move as well. From a psychological standpoint a woman's regiment would be in an advantageous position vis a vis the British Indian Army, the Indian Government and the Indian people in general, had they come to know of its existence.

The RJR was comprised mostly of the women belonging to the Tamil labourers of the rubber plantations, their wives or daughters. Despite the poverty and the exploitation, the Tamil labourers had carried their lives with dignity. They had retained their culture and tradition, built temples and celebrated their festivals. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment gave the women the respect and the self worth that they were looking for. The women were very young, often in their teens. The educated ones occupied higher ranks. Notable names included Janaki Davar, Lt. Pratima Pal, Pratima Sen, Naik (later Havildar) Bela Datta, Karuna Mukherjee, Lt. Mamata Mehta, Lt. Manavati Pandey (Arya), 2nd Lt. Rama Mehta, Major Leelavati Mehta, Ranu Bhattacharya, Chandramukhi Devi (Mataji), Lt. M Satyavati Thevar, Anjalai Ponnusami, Meenachi Perumal, Havildars Josephine and Stella (who were later killed in action), Rasammah Bhopalan, and so on. The women in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment received the same basic military training as male INA recruits.

The RJR regiment was not an easy life. The camp life was bereft of all material comforts. The girls had to undergo hard training and had to be prepared for regular combat operations. They were trained in guerrilla operations, sabotage missions, ambush

training, digging of trenches and many other regular exercises. They were grouped into combat and non combat sections. The non combat section was mostly concerned with the nursing duties in the hospitals for the soldiers wounded in the battles. According to the reminiscences of one Rani Mamata Mehta, she said, "We were given a wide range of training, with an eye that we one day would be fighting a real battle. We underwent military and combat training with drills, route marches as well as weapons training in Sten gun, Bren gun, Machine gun, hand grenades, and bayonet charges. We were also trained in operating anti aircraft guns. Our standard issue guns had large recoil which our shoulders had to sustain when we fired. Bayonet charge onto a sand bag was energy sapping, and so were the route marches through jungle terrain on limited rations. And we were always reminded that this training was for a battle where life and death would depend on how well we trained". The Ranis also helped in putting up cultural shows in which Netaji was often present in the audience. Women of the RJR were trained for the first 6 months in the Singapore training camp and when the advance HQ of the INA and the Provisional Government were shifted to Burma, an RJR camp was opened near Rangoon. In Burma a large no. of women from the Bengali staffs of Indian Independence League had joined the regiment. In April 1944 the first RJR unit moved to Maymyo and a new batch arrived in Rangoon. The RJR did not actually fight any battles and did not see any combat operations. But they played a key role in the support functions and in nursing the sick and the wounded. The main reason of their not getting a combat role was open hostility from the Japanese Army who refused to provide arms and ammunition.

The RJR had to be dismantled when the Azad Hind Government had to retreat from Burma. The first batch of hundred girls were sent by March end. Another batch of girls along with their commander Janaki Davar marched with Netaji himself in their retreat to Bangkok over a period of three weeks, mostly by foot.



Lt. Janaki Davar (second from left) and other Jhansi Rani Regiment troopers. Janaki joined RJR when she was just seventeen years old and rose to lead it. Janaki was one of the Ranis who had marched alongside Bose in their great retreat from the advancing British Army. Image Courtesy: thebetterindia.com



Ranis undergoing rigorous training in their camps. They were trained for 6 months on machine gun, pistol, rifle and hand grenades. The leaders of the command unit were also trained in jungle and guerrilla warfare. Image courtesy: storypick.com

“The opening of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment Training Camp is an important landmark in the progress of our movement in East Asia”

Battles – Rise and Fall of INA

The Secret Service and its activities

Writes Prof. Priyadarshi Mukherjee in his book, 'Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Contemporary Anecdotes, Reminiscences and Wartime Reportage', "One of the hitherto unknown facts, that ought to be recognized as a significant phase in the history of Indian freedom movement, has been revealed in the book 'Netajir Secret Service' written in Bengali by Dr. Pabitramohan Roy. Dr. Roy, to evade arrest in Dhaka, had traveled to Malaya via Rangoon and came in contact with Rashbehari Bose and got involved with the Indian Independence League (IIL). He joined the secret service of INA following the orders of Netaji Subhas Bose." An organization named Indian Swaraj Institution was inaugurated as the IIL branch in the Penang of Malaya. Its objective was to conduct covert operations in India. Cadets from various regions of India were selected and a training camp was set up. Noni Pal, Satyendra Bardhan and Phoni Roy joined the camp. They had traveled to India in 1942 to propagate the message of Azad Hind, but all of them were caught by British police and army. Satyendra was hanged. During the tussle between IIL, INA and Japanese, the Penang centre was closed down. Managers of the League promised to take all responsibilities of families of people sent for the duty. The trainees of the camp were taught on wireless message transmission and reception, making transmitters, propaganda, production and usage of explosive materials, conducting covert operations, causing damage to enemies and destructive assignments, collecting enemy messages, necessary techniques of disguise. They also received full fledged training in drill, jogging, swimming in the sea, rowing, usage of rifle, revolver, hand grenades and tommy guns.

On 2nd September 1943, Dr. Roy first met Netaji along with his colleagues. Netaji held discussions with each of them separately. All the details regarding this group was with Netaji only and all the plans regarding the operations of this group was formulated by Netaji. Major Swami was the in charge of the training camps. Netaji's parting message to the secret operations group was as follows – '*You, now have guaranteed complete proof of fact how dangerously complete faith and trust I have placed in you. Henceforth*

your motto shall be do or die. Again in the name of Jagadamba Durga and by her grace, I avowedly assure you – Victory shall be ours, Yours. May my mother Durga bless you. But always remember, whether war should be brutal or a human business is beside the point. Everyone knows that no war can be conducted and fought with kid's gloves. Modern war esp. takes an appalling toll in human lives and property. No civilized nation risks it lightly, but when it is forced on, it has to be waged in a manner that makes opponents wince. This is not done in a vindictive spirit but in a cold, calculated manner, to break the opponent's morale, so that he is forced to sue for peace.' Then Netaji drew Pabitra away from the others and whispered in a confidential manner – 'Sometime later you might get an astonishing and terribly sad news. But do not get dejected or depressed. We will meet again. Go and serve the motherland to your utmost; and glorify the names of your parents.'

On 1st January 1944 the group comprising of Pabitramohan Roy, Mahendra Singh and Amrik Singh Gill, Tuhin Mukherjee and Samarendra Sengupta were told that they would be ready to be sent on a secret mission. In March 1944, the highly trained group of men were despatched by submarine to the Orissa coast of Puri where they hid their equipment and got separated. Pabitra set to work in Calcutta to spread the message of the advance of INA to motivate people to launch a revolution. He had been constantly in disguise wherever he went and befriended police, government, and other officials for operational requirement. In Puri Pabitra was disguised as a timber merchant from Calcutta. He tried to contact the young revolutionaries who were known to be sympathetic to Netaji. But to his surprise nobody showed any remote interest to respond to Netaji's call of a revolution within. Even the erstwhile revolutionaries had been cold about Netaji and his own party associates refused to help Pabitra. One prominent Communist Party member, who was once a close associate of Masterda Surjyo Sen and had cooled his heels in Andamans (Ganesh Ghosh) told Pabitra in clear terms that he would not help any of Netaji's men. The Communist party members tried their best to sabotage any information pertaining to the advancement of I.N.A. Unfortunately during this time almost all of Netaji's revolutionary colleagues were behind the bars - that included the entire top brass of Bengal Volunteers - Hem Chandra Ghosh, Satya Ranjan Bakshi, Major Satya Gupta, Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy. Biplobi Trailokya Maharaj of Anushilon Samity, Anil Roy and Leela Roy of Sri Sangha, Niharendu Dutta Majumdar were also interned and hence no major organisational support was available. Pabitra set up his transmitter and sent many useful messages across. He got help from Haridas Mitra and Bela Mitra (who was a niece of Netaji) and Jyotish Bose. In the meanwhile other secret service members like Alibaba, Akbar, Dr. Prafulla Kumar Datta (officer in charge of the Penang camp), who had also come down for covert

activities, were arrested on 18 Dec 1944. Pabitra was caught from Puri on 18 January 1945, and Amrik Singh was also caught and both of them, together with Jyotish Bose and Haripada Mitra were tortured and sentenced to gallows on the charge of waging war on the crown in a farcical and extremely secretive trial. Undaunted, Bela sought the help of Gandhiji, whose timely help saved them from the gallows. On 29 May 1945, on the first day of the trial of Pabitra, the first one to appear as king's evidence was Tuhin Mukherjee. Without mentioning the names of Azad Hind he termed the entire episode as Japanese conspiracy and made derogatory comments about Netaji and Rashbehari Bose.

Several other secret service agents also had come to India that included Bhagwan Lu, S.N Chopra and others who were despatched to NWFP, Bengal, United Provinces and Bombay, after landing in the Kathiawar coast. S.N Chopra started transmitting important information on the British army formation in the North East, esp. Imphal. S.N Chopra was caught by British police. Bhagwan Lu met Bose's family in Calcutta to deliver his message. The message of Prabhavati Devi's death was conveyed to Netaji through a wireless which left him heartbroken.

Preparations for the War

Once it was decided that INA would march into India from Burma, Netaji decided to shift the Head Quarters of the provisional government of Azad Hind and the Indian Independence League to Rangoon on January 7, 1944. The INA plan was to first capture Imphal and Kohima and then enter the plains of Assam and Bengal. Netaji had high hopes that once INA reaches Bengal, entire Bengal will erupt in a revolution. "Action from within the country must synchronize with the action from without", said Bose. The strategy was that apart from the three regular regiments, the Bahadur group would penetrate behind the enemy lines conducting sabotage and making daring raids and bring back as many prisoners of war as possible, the intelligence group would try to convert the British Indian troops on their side by means of propaganda and would try to gather as much information, and the Reinforcement group would be in charge of the education of the Indian prisoners before they joined the INA. Netaji wanted INA to be seen as a spearhead of entry into India and therefore retain their identity as a regiment or a battalion. The command of INA would always be under an Indian officer and any Indian territory would be handed over to INA for administration. He believed that the first drop of blood on Indian soil would be that of an Indian, a member of the INA and told the same to Terauchi who was apprehensive that INA men might defect to the British Indian Army and therefore proposed that the Japanese army would do all that was

needed to liberate India and that only espionage and propaganda groups should be used in the field (Dr. R.C Majumdar, History of the Freedom Movement of India). Bose said that, "Any liberation of India secured through Japanese sacrifices, is worse than slavery." Terauchi agreed to the deployment of one regiment on the condition that if that regiment came up the Japanese standard, rest of the army would be sent to action.

The no. 1 Guerrilla Regiment, known as Subhas Brigade, that was raised as Taiping in Malaya, under the command of Shah Nawaz Khan, arrived in Rangoon in January 1944, by covering at least 400 miles on foot. On 24 January, 1944, General Katakura; Chief of the Japanese General Staff in Burma, met Netaji and Shah Nawaz and discussed, behind closed doors, the general strategy of the impending campaign against India, and the role that had been assigned in it to the I.N.A. Among other things, "Katakura revealed that it was a part of the Japanese plan to launch a heavy air attack on Calcutta simultaneously with the advance of land forces. Netaji expressed himself against this. He told the Japanese General that there should be no indiscriminate bombing of Indian civilians as it would lead to much panic and suffering, and would probably shake the confidence of the Indian people in him." The idea was accordingly abandoned (Dr. R.C Majumdar, History of the Freedom Movement of India).

There was a tremendous enthusiasm among soldiers and ordinary people alike. Even the sick and the physically handicapped soldiers who had arrived in Rangoon wanted earnestly to take part in the battle. Supply of food and other facilities like transport arrangements by the Japanese liaison agency Hikari Kikan was poor. Indian Independence League members supplied the soldiers with food and other necessary items wherever the trains stopped. Supply depots and hospitals were established en route to care for the sick and injured and also to provide supplies. A large number of civilians were also recruited and trained for being part of the regular army.

Netaji, after his arrival in Burma, laid emphasis on fund collection to sponsor the war efforts, in building a war chest. A special committee to raise funds was established and it was named as Netaji fund Committee. Its first chairman was Yellappah. The Burma Government gave the fullest support for the work. As already mentioned, Habib contributed a crore and 3 lakhs of rupees in jewelry, cash and other assets. Ziwawadi estates were given over to the Azad Hind. One B. Ghosh gave his all, including his own factory and placed himself at the disposal of Netaji. Nizami, Bashir Ahmed, Mrs. Hemraj Betai were other notable "total mobilizers" who gave up everything. Netaji decorated them with the Sevak-e-Hind medal. For the reconstruction and civil administration of the occupied territories a large no. of workers were mobilized. Special proclamations were

issued by Netaji for the occupied territories. A large ordinance Base depot was established in Rangoon. Supply base was streamlined under the Ministry of Supplies of the provisional Government. General Staff Branch was organized under Habibur Rahman to collect information and intelligence from contacts in the fronts and in India. Plans of operation were held in consultation with the Japanese. Officer's training school was established, training in wireless and other necessary training for both army men and civilians, special intensive training was given to the troops of the Bahadur group.

Notwithstanding the level of preparation, Maj. Gen. A.C Chatterjee recalls that when the troops reached Burma, they had no artillery of their own, not even mortars. Machine guns were only of medium size and deficient of belts, and spare parts were not available. Guerrilla regiments had no wireless equipment or telephones. Transport for carrying extra arms and ammunition across country were not available. Medical supplies were short. There were shortage of boots and men had to walk barefooted. Food was in short supply, clothing was a problem too, there were no woolens, blankets were miserable. "The renegade army", remarked a British intelligence report, "marched blithely into the Imphal campaign wearing Khaki drill shorts." (The Forgotten Army - Peter Ward Fay).

Netaji had an intense discussion with Kawabe, Japanese commander in chief, and reinforced his point that Azad Hind Fauj would take the lead in the battle. He also made clear to the Japanese that upholding the honour of Indian men and women was very important to him. In the book, "The Forgotten Army", based on the reminiscences of Prem Sehgal and Lakshmi Sehgal, by Peter Ward Fay, the author argues that Netaji, who demanded an equal treatment and respect for all Indians from the Japanese, did not hesitate to approach the top political and military brass of Japan to have his own way, while negotiating with the Kikan on battle strategy. The Japanese (contrary to the British and the Communist propaganda) held Bose in tremendous respect and had unshakable faith in his interpretation of the political and military events. Kawabe therefore gave way to Bose's demands. One of the points of agreement of equality of standing was that when Japanese and Indian military officers of equal rank met, they would salute together, without waiting for the other. Obviously INA was treated far above the other allied forces of Japanese viz. Nanking army, the Thai army, and the Burmese army of Aung San. About the Indian National Army of Bose, the Japanese handbook to their soldiers read, "Acknowledge these Indians to be not by any means a fifth column of the Japanese army, nor a convenient source of coolie labour, but men fighting for the independence of their motherland, fighting our common enemy for a common purpose."

For the civil administration and the reconstruction work in the liberated areas, Netaji had formed a special Rehabilitation department. This department conducted the recruitment and training of the workers like Civil Administrators, the police force, medical and health officers, health and sanitary inspectors, dressers, nursing orderlies, engineers, overseers, mechanics, fitters, carpenters, engine drivers etc. Training of the volunteers consisted of a refresher course in the trades together with a short course in spiritual and military training to make them morally and physically equipped to work with the combat units under all conditions. The workers were trained to serve their own people in a liberated area in a selfless spirit. After their training the reconstruction workers were equipped with kits suitable for their special jobs and sent to the front in units like Administrative, Health, Medical, Engineering etc. as members of the Azad Hind Dal. The AHD workers were supposed to take up reconstruction work in the liberated zones in the same spirit as relief workers would work in a devastated region, in the spirit of seva. The immediate duty of the AHD was to clear the ground of debris, mines, bombs, and to make the area completely safe for the civil life, restore the utility services and establish law and order, provide essential food items, take health measures for preventing epidemics, open hospitals and medical relief centers, organize publicity and propaganda for explaining the aims and objectives of the Azad Hind Government among the masses and restore the morale of the local people. Special postage stamps and currency notes were prepared by the Azad Hind Government for use in the liberated areas. After ensuring that the area was safe and habitable and under the operations of a stable Government of the local people, the AHD was to move further for similar work, along with the soldiers. - Adapted from Netaji in East Asia, by N. Sengupta, who was a Secretary of the Reconstruction Department (Azad Hind Dal), at the Rear HQ, IIL, Singapore.

Medical department was set up under A.C Allagappan. Large base hospital was established in Mayang. Nurses from Rani Jhansi Regiment took up the care of sick and wounded. In January 1944, Netaji also planned to establish a suicide squad that would undertake very dangerous and risky missions. Even Rani of Jhansi members were willing to be part of this team. Indian Independence League Headquarters was established in Rangoon and was later amalgamated with the Head Quarters of the Burma branch. An internal security department was created to keep a check on the activities of the British spies and the Pro British agents. Debnath Das was the chairman. A woman's branch was established with Bela Mukherjee as the secretary. This organization worked for propaganda among women, and collection of materials for the relief and nursing work. Major General A.C Chatterjee was appointed as the Governor of the liberated territories. Detail administrative policies were chalked out w.r.t

operations in the liberated areas. A joint Indo Japanese coordination committee for the war efforts was proposed but was shelved after discussion on the vexatious issue of nominating a chairman from the Indian National Army vis a vis from the Japanese side. Netaji was preparing for a long drawn war and hence established Bal Senas with children between 6 and 10 years who would be replacing the youth as time passes.

In March 1944, as the three battalions of the INA's Gandhi Brigade, commanded by I. Kiani, arrived in Burma, Netaji broadcasted over radio from Rangoon the death of Kasturba Gandhi, Mahatma's wife, in Poona, while in British custody. Bose, alongside Lakshmi Swaminathan, paid a glowing tribute to the "great lady who was a mother to the Indian people." He urged the sons and daughters of India to avenge the death of their mother Kasturba by throwing off the British empire.

Once A.C Chatterjee became the chief administrator of the liberated areas, Netaji appointed N. Raghavan as his finance minister who was able to raise resources from wealthy South Indian merchants in Malaya and Burma. Nambiar, who was in Germany, was made a member of the cabinet and the Indian Legion was declared to be a branch of the INA. Yellappa and Ishar Singh became ministers and S.M Bashir of Rangoon was brought as an adviser. By April 1944, Azad Hind Government issued postage stamps for use in the liberated zone. Allagappan was given the responsibility of the supplies.

Azad Hind Bank was set up on 5th April after a great deal of wrangling with General Isoda, the chief of Hikari Kikan (S.A. Ayer, Story of the INA). Netaji had thought of every aspect of the campaign and he planned meticulously for reconstruction and establishment of a civilian administration after the liberation, even if the enemy followed a scorched earth policy and destroyed everything. Azad Hind Dal that was set up with volunteers would swing into action for putting up improvised huts, engineers would get engaged to pump water into the fields to grow food, improve street lighting, drinking water would be made available and temporary roads would be set up. Azad Hind bank would supply currency, and the postal system would start functioning to meet immediate needs of the people. His forces were handicapped on many fronts and he was dependent on the Japanese troops for arms and ammunition and battle strategies on the ground. He told his troops before they departed, "I give you the freest choice to decide whether you really want to lay down your lives for the cause. I tell you in the plainest possible words that I promise you nothing but hunger, thirst, suffering and death. You are free to choose your path." Not one man stepped out of the rank. There were two divisions of INA that were already in Burma - the first was commanded by Major General M.Z Kiani and the second by Col. Shah Nawaz Khan.

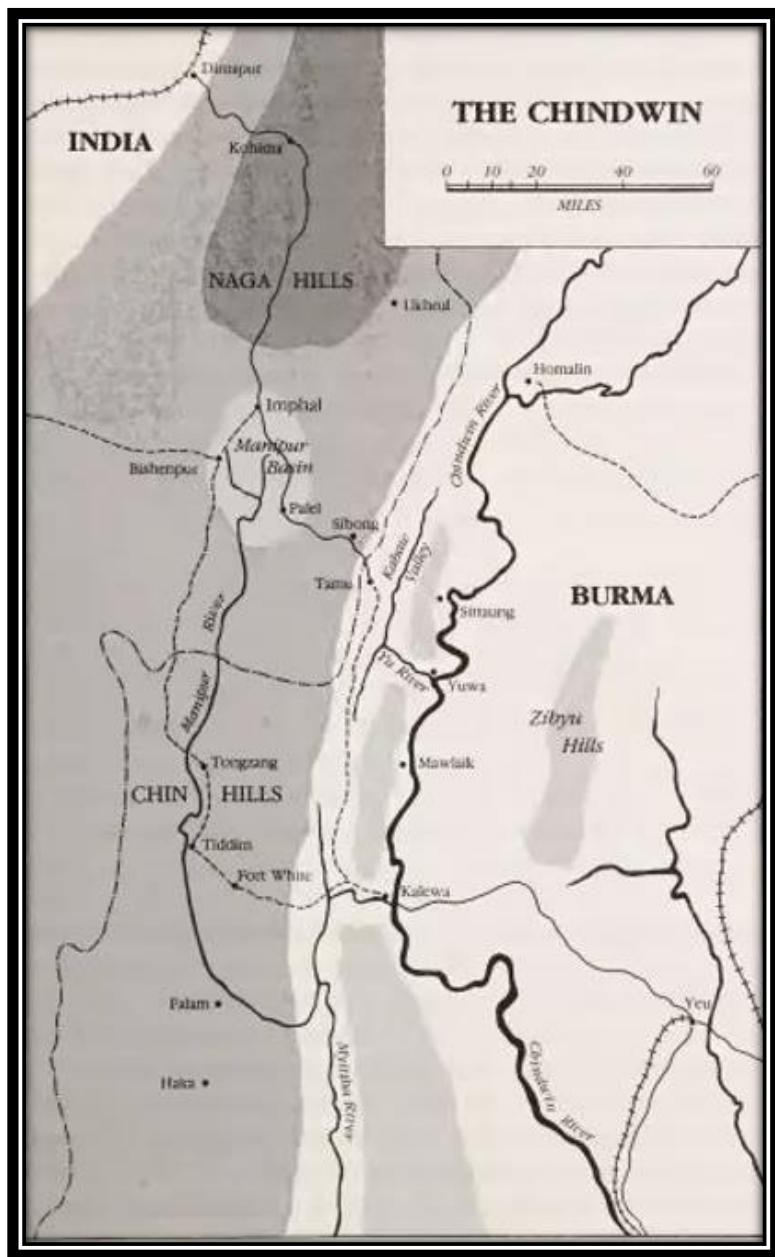


Image: courtesy The Forgotten Army

The Map shows the route through which the Indian National Army approached the borders of India. One battalion of Subhas Brigade left Rangoon for Prome and adopting a diversionary tactics proceeded towards Arakan. The remaining part of the first brigade approached through Haka and Falam to Tiddim and Fort White after crossing Chindwin, proceeded through Chin Hills towards the Bishenpur sector. Another regiment proceeded via Naga Hills and Kabaw valley to lay siege to Kohima. National flag was raised atop Kohima Hills. Haka Falam was successfully captured. Palel aerodrome was brought down and severe fighting erupted in the Bishnupur sector of Manipur Basin, with the objective of capturing Imphal. The victories in Kohima and Bishnupur were short lived owing to the onset of early monsoon that cut off the

supply line, rendering resistance almost impossible against a desperate, better armed and better equipped enemy who had a good stock of food available. Also lack of air force contributed to the eventual defeat of INA and the Japanese forces. The overall operation was badly planned by the Japanese which led to the failure of the mission. They had underestimated the British Indian forces after their swift victory in Singapore and Malaya had made them overconfident. Also treachery of Major Prabhudayal and Major Garewal contributed to the defeat by exposing the problems and positions of INA to the enemy.

The War Begins

Capture of Arakan

Subhas Brigade was placed under the direct command, for purpose of operations only, of the Japanese General Head Quarters in Burma. Its commander, Shah Nawaz Khan, saw the Japanese Commander-in-Chief who apprised him fully of the military situation at the Indo-Burma border. Shah Nawaz writes: "He told me that the main concentration of British and American forces was at Sadiya-Imphal-Tamu and Tiddim and that they were preparing to attack the Japanese forces with the object of recapturing Burma. He told me that there were powerful British forces at Aijal (probably one Brigade) and Lungleh (one Brigade) which were threatening the left flanks of the Japanese forces, and were in a position to advance to Kalewa and cut off the main supply line of the Japanese forces, and that the intention of the Japanese army was to attack and capture Tiddim-Tamu and Imphal." Dr. R. C Majumdar writes in the History of Freedom Movement, 'The role allotted to the Subhas Brigade was as follows : The Battalion No. 1 was to proceed via Prome to the Kaladan valley in Arakan. The Battalions Nos. 2 and 3 were to proceed via Mandalay and Kalewa to the Chin Hill area of Haka and Falam.

On 3 February, 1944, on the eve of the departure of these Battalions from Rangoon, Netaji delivered his farewell speech to the three thousand soldiers who "in full military kit stood rigidly to attention for an hour and a half and listened to every word he said with rapt attention." He told them that they would be put to the severest test by the Japanese authorities, and the future of I.N.A.'s role in the battle for India's freedom would depend upon them. He made a stirring appeal to them in the following words: "***Blood is calling to blood ! Arise ! We have no time to lose. Take up your arms...We shall carve our way through the enemy's ranks, or, if God wills, we shall die a martyr's death. The road to Delhi is the road to freedom..On to Delhi.***

Intelligence reports suggested that British Army was expecting an attack from the Chittagong side. A Bahadur group of the INA, led by Lt. Col. L.S Misra was deployed on the Arakan front where the offensive was launched. Troops of the Bahadur Group under Col. Misra and Major Mehar Das, both later decorated as Sardar-e-Jung, attacked the enemy along the Mayu river, with extreme bravery, with help from the Japanese. They tried to bring Indian prisoners of war to their sides but as the food situation was not favourable they had to release the prisoners. INA and Japanese troops occupied Buthiadong and the 7th Division of the British Indian Division was completely destroyed. Lt. Hari Singh won the Sher-e-Hind medal by displaying extra ordinary valour as he slaughtered seven British soldiers single handed. Writes Peter Fay, about the Bahadur Group, "The battalion is composed of Sikhs, Jats and Dogras, all ex-prisoners of war. It possesses no signal equipment, bicycles, or motorcycles, and only one 3-ton ration lorry. Each platoon has a mule cart which is manhandled by six men. These carts carry ammunition and officers' kits. There are no stretchers, and there is a great shortage of bandages and iodine. Only half the battalion possess field dressings, the majority of these are the original British issue. Each company [there were five in the battalion] has six anti tank rifles, six Bren light machine guns, and six Vickers machine guns. The senior representative of the Bahadur Group has a stock of British hand grenades which he issues to men going forward on duty. Some NCOs and men in the battalion carry grenades. . . . Number 2 and 3 Battalions are said to be similarly equipped and organized. "The plan", Zaman Kiani wrote years later, "was that the Japanese, possessing heavier weapons, should first break the outer defences of India, and then allow the I.N.A. 1st Division to pass through and spread out for Guerrilla operations . . . in Assam and Bengal." That was how the business was to have gone." Unfortunately, it did not happen that way.

Writes R.C Majumdar, "On 4 February, 1944, the Battalion No. 1 of the Subhas Brigade left Rangoon by train for Prome. From Prome they marched on foot via Taungup and Myo Haing and arrived at Kyauktaw (in Akyab) on the Kaladan river, suffering casualties on the way from aerial bombing of the enemy." The bombing took place in Taungup pass. 16 INA men were dead and few boats were drowned. These troops were under the command of Major P.S Raturi, Sardar-e-Jung. Here they formed the base in the middle of March, 1944, and inflicted a defeat upon the much-praised West African troops in the British army, who was engaged in constructing a bridge over the Kaladan in order to join the two parallel roads running along the eastern and the western banks of the river. There was a fierce hand to hand fight. The enemy was driven from the eastern bank, leaving 250 dead in the field and large amount of stores. Sixteen of their boats were also sunk. The casualties of the I.N.A. were 14 killed and 22 wounded. The

Indian Battalion, reinforced by Japanese troops, then advanced along both the banks of the Kaladan for about fifty miles north to Paletwa. After a severe fight they captured it and also another place, Daletine nearby. From Daletine they could see the frontier of India forty miles to the west distinctly and were very eager to reach it. The nearest British post on the Indian side was Mowdok about fifty miles to the east of Cox Bazar. Major Raturi and his men were very eager to attack this post. It was captured by a surprise attack during night (May, 1944) and the enemy fled in panic leaving large quantities of arms, ammunition and rations. Says Dr. Majumdar, "The entry of the I.N.A. on Indian territory was a most touching scene. Soldiers laid themselves flat on the ground and passionately kissed the sacred soil of their motherland which they had set out to liberate. A regular flag-hoisting ceremony was held amidst great rejoicing and singing of the Azad Hind Fauj Anthem. On account of the difficulty of supply as well as the impending counter-attack by the British forces, the Japanese forces decided to withdraw from Mowdok and advised the I.N.A. Commander to do the same. The I.N.A. officers with one voice refused to do so. "No, sir," they told their Commander, "the Japanese can retreat because Tokyo lies that way; our goal—the Red Fort, Delhi, lies ahead of us. We have orders to get to Delhi. There is no going back for us." The Commanding Officer of the I. N. A. thereupon decided to leave one Company under the command of Capt. Suraj Mal at Mowdok to guard the flag and withdraw the remainder. The Japanese, admiring the spirit—almost a suicidal role—of the I.N.A. men, left one Platoon of their own troops to share the fate of the Indians. These Japanese troops were put under direct command of Capt. Suraj Mal. "It was probably the first time in the history of the Japanese army that their troops had been placed under command of a foreign officer." Evidently moved by this heroic sacrifice and the brilliant record of the I. N. A. men, "the Japanese Commander-in-Chief in Burma went to Netaji and bowing before him said: "Your Excellency, we were wrong. We misjudged the soldiers of the I. N. A. We know now that they are no mercenaries, but real patriots." Capt. Suraj Mal and his band of heroic fighters stayed at Mowdok from May to September, 1944. During this period they were constantly attacked by the British forces but always succeeded in repulsing them. On one occasion a small post of 20 men was attacked successively three times during the same day by the enemy, about 150 strong with heavy artillery and mortars, and the last one was preceded by aerial bombardment. All the attacks were repulsed, and when Suraj Mal hurried to the post with a reinforcement of 50 men, he attacked the British base three miles away at dusk. It was so unexpected that the enemy ran helter-skelter in all directions." In September 1944 this force as well as the one on Arakan retired to Rangoon on Netaji's specific orders as the Imphal campaign did not succeed.

Capture of Haka Falam

The remaining part of the first brigade consisting of the 2nd and 3rd battalions proceeded to the North to the Haka-Falam area to take that over from the Japanese troops. It would defend this area to protect the line of communication between Kalewa to Tamu in the North and Kalewa and Tiddim in the North West. This was not liked by Col. Shah Nawaz Khan who was in charge, as they could have shown much valour and courage in carrying out offensive than defending a communication line. There was lack of transportation and the men had to carry rations on their back over long distances on hilly tracts. Also malaria and dysentery took their tolls. Lack of suitable clothing left the men unprotected in the cold of the mountains. The Parwana company under Amrik Singh left Falam for Haka. There were skirmishes with the enemy and the occupation of Haka was carried out after destroying the enemy outpost of Chunsong. The soldiers of INA displayed magnificent courage in capturing the fortified enemy positions. Lt. Lehna Singh for instance displayed extra ordinary bravery in capturing a machine gun post on Klaung Klaung Road with only ten men and then chased the British troops for miles. Lt. Sikandar Khan displayed heroism in capturing enemy soldiers with a revolver.

There was terrible shortage of food in Haka and the soldiers had to live on a hilly grass, but they had indomitable courage to continue amidst all adversities. It was extremely cold in Haka and they had no proper winter garments. Enemy camps were more in Haka and enemies were supplied well via air drops. The Parwana commander Lt. Amrik Singh decided to launch frequent attacks. On 14th and 16th April the British guerrilla forces launched a heavy artillery attack on Klaung Klaung post. An army of 20 men from INA defended against one hundred men from British command and captured their assault machine guns. Meanwhile Japanese forces had advanced up to Tiddim. Netaji had asked Subhas Brigade in a letter to be prepared for attacking Imphal, since Gandhi and Azad brigade were already on their way. Major Mehboob Ahmed, Captain Amrik Singh and the Parwana team from Haka was instructed to capture the British outpost in Klaung Klaung. They mounted a steep hill and launched a severe hand to hand fight with the British forces who had the advantages of height as well as heavy artillery. After an intense battle the outpost was captured. The Japanese were satisfied of the military skill and efficiency of the I. N. A. and issued instructions 'that the main body of the Brigade would proceed to Kohima and would be prepared, on the fall of Imphal, to advance rapidly and cross the Brahmaputra into the heart of Bengal.' A small force of 150 and 300 men of INA were left at Haka and Falam resp. and the rest marched towards Kohima, the capital of the Naga Hills in Assam, and they arrived there

in the last week of May, 1944. Even the men suffering from malaria and greatly weakened by it, jumped on to the bandwagon to capture Kohima.

In 1944, British tried to make roads from Imphal to Silchar and lower Assam, to Kalewa on the Chindwin through Tiddim and Fort White, to Kabaw valley and north to Kohima, beyond which lies the upper valley of Brahmaputra. In 1942 British had withdrawn from Burma, and they had largely moved along these tracks, particularly the Tamu-Manipur track. Once into the mountains they went no farther, they held on to Imphal. There were the impregnable Chin Hills on which lay Haka, Falam, Tiddim, Fort White and Tongzang and on whose other side lay Kalewa, which gave way to the Naga Hills on the North after crossing the Manipur Basin with towns like Imphal and Bishnupur and villages like Moirang. On March 18, INA moved towards Imphal and Kohima. Lt. General Mutaguchi was the commander of the fifteenth army of the Japanese forces to take on Imphal and Assam. Bose moved his Headquarters from Rangoon to Maymyo near Mandalay to get news from the front and establish closer coordination for the assault on Imphal. Maymyo was closer to the Imphal and from Maymo it should be possible to move to the Manipur basin. whole point of the offensive from the perspective of Azad Hind was to establish an army and a provisional Government on Indian soil. Bose had earlier urged Mutaguchi to avoid cutting Imphal Kohima road and leave a route open for the British to retreat. Netaji had hoped that a consequence of the fall of Imphal will be a revolt in Bengal and Bihar against the British rule. But INA lost the propaganda war to the British Government as nothing about Netaji and his forces came to the knowledge of the general public of India. They only knew that British Indian forces were fighting an advancing Japanese army. Bose was already a declared enemy in the eyes of the Western media and he was regarded as "Traitor", "Renegade" and his army a fifth columnist of the Japanese army. So nobody could get to know about the advancing INA.

Fall of Kohima

Writes Peter Fay in *The Forgotten Army*, "At first the offensive, which began on March 8, went just as it was supposed to go. Elements of Mutaguchi's 33rd Division, curling around the flanks of the British some distance down the track that led due south out of the Manipur basin to Tongzang, Tiddim, and beyond, came within an ace of trapping the 17th Indian Division. And though the 17th managed to extricate itself, Mutaguchi did not mind. It would be his, with the others, at Imphal. "I got big net, I catch big fish" Prem remembers the general saying. It had great strategic value, however, for it lay at the point where the road from upper Assam into the Manipur basin climbs to forty-five hundred feet and turns south for Imphal. This was the road over which most of Slim's

men and stores had to come. If the Japanese took Kohima, they denied Slim the road and at the same time threatened Dimapur and the rail line to Ledo. So both sides fought desperately for the place. The British, however, were caught off balance by the speed and the scale of the Japanese attack."

Going against the plan of Bose, Mutaguchi chose to lay siege to Imphal. He obstructed the Imphal Kohima road, denying the chance to the British to escape. Right in the beginning, in early March 1944, groups of men belonging to the Bahadur group and Azad Hind Dal, went up to the Kohima sector accompanying the Japanese Manchurian division. They were under the command of Captain Maggar Singh, Captain Amar Singh and Dalapati Sinha. The combined forces had taken Ukhrul and Kohima. Japanese forces had cut the Kohima Dimapur road as per Mutaguchi's plan and had encircled the British. The first regiment from Haka Falam arrived in the Kohima sector passing through Kabaw valley via Tamu, Humine, Ukhrul and Kohima. In Kohima the Tri Colour flag was hoisted on the mountain tops. Final onslaught on Kohima was done under the command of Col. Thakur Singh, commander of the Subhas Brigade. The main danger that was looming large was the monsoon. The men lived on the paddy collected from the Naga villages. The high handed and rude behaviour of the Japanese liaison office with the local Nagas and Chins and the British policy of bribing them, worked unfavourably against INA men. The men barely survived by boiling mountain grass with paddy and many of them fell sick and weak from starvation. Despite that they held on steadfastly against an advancing enemy that was well fed and strong and had plenty of arms and ammunition. There was no medicine available for treatment against malaria and other diseases that befell them in the monsoon. The Japanese and the Indian troop had been completely cut off by the monsoon as the only hilly tract for their supplies was washed away. Stronger enemy forces were deployed on the Kohima Ukhrul road and the monsoon also intensified. The forces had to retreat to Tamu where ration was available. The whole retreat was a grilling and chilling experience as many people died en route on account of weakness, starvation, dysentery and insect bites. When Netaji heard of their condition, he ordered an immediate retreat of all the troops of the first division to the eastern bank of Chindwin. Forces from Kohima under Shah Nawaz Khan marched to Ahlow, crossed Yeu river and went by boat along Chindwin to Kalewa. High handedness of the Japanese middle ranked officials led to some frictions between the INA and the Japanese soldiers (Maj. Gen. A.C Chatterjee - India's Struggle for Freedom).

Dr. R.C Majumdar notes in the History of the Freedom Movement, "by the end of May, when the regular I. N. A. troops arrived at Kohima, the military position of the Japanese

forces in this area had changed for the worse. The Japanese air force having been transferred to the Pacific area to fight the Americans, considerable number of troops were sent by air to the besieged city of Imphal by the British. While the Japanese failed to

capture Imphal, a powerful force of the British was counter attacking from the direction of Dimapore and Kohima. The I. N. A. men at Kohima held their post most gallantly and beat back attack after attack. To make matters worse, the monsoon had broken out and it was impossible for the supply services to supply rations to troops in that area. So the Japanese forces retired to Tamu and the I. N. A., much against its will, had to withdraw to the same place in June, 1944. This they did with the greatest difficulty as the tracks were washed away by torrential rain and soldiers had to walk several hundred miles through the knee deep mud. A few days later the Japanese forces, and the I. N. A. with them, had to withdraw to the east bank of the Chindwin river. Thus ended the liberating campaign of the Subhas Brigade."

Battle of Imphal: Capture of Moirang and Bishnupur

As the Arakan and the Kaladan fronts were fully developed and Kohima attack was underway, the attack on Imphal was set in motion. 1st division under M.Z Kiani was sent to Imphal. As already discussed, part of the first brigade was diverted towards Haka for protecting the line of communication. This was a great disappointment to the troop and its leader Shah Nawaz Khan. This also proved to be a costly mistake as the soldiers suffered from fatigue, diseases and hunger and were worn out before they could put up a gallant fight. The 2nd Gandhi regiment under the command of Inayat Kiani reached Mandalay using goods trains and trucks from Rangoon. They went to Yeu by foot or truck and from there reached Kalewa by crossing Chindwin river. The INA along with the Japanese forces reached Manipur on 18 March 1944. The combined forces of the Japanese and the INA forced the British to retreat by capturing British bases of Zozo, Thingaiphai and Churachandpur. The Bahadur group after crossing Tiddim and Moirang went as far as Bishnupur near Imphal. Col. Shaukat Malik was in charge of this troop. 17th British division was completely routed and retreated to Bishnupur. Moirang was their strong base until 13th April. The Bahadur group of the INA, led by Shaukat Ali Malik, had advanced to the Bishnupur sector of Imphal. Malik hoisted the Indian Tricolour in Moirang, near Imphal on April 14, 1944. Col. Malik took several prisoners of war who had to be released on account of shortage of food. Netaji awarded Sardar-e-Jung gallantry medal to Col. Malik. For about 200 men who were suffering from malaria, a camp was established. Neelamani Singh and Koireng Singh (who later became Chief Minister of Manipur) among local Manipuri leaders, helped the INA

soldiers. Local Meiteis, who were already alienated from the British on account of the killing of their hero Bir Tikendrajit in 1891, tried to help the INA in every possible way. Chaoba of the Maram village helped INA with food and coolies. Later he and his family members shifted to Rangoon and there he met Netaji through the intervention of Major Swami. Some 32 Meiteis who earned their livelihood in Burma joined the INA under Let. Guno Singh of Khurai (Manipur) and they formed an advanced party. 13 out of the 32 reached Palel to obtain enemy secrets and also enlist help from the local people. A large no. of Manipuri tribal also joined the movement against the British. Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha joined hands with the INA with the common objective of gaining independence. British forces took terrible revenge. Moirang to Ningthoukhong was heavily bombed. The members of Manipuri Mahasabha were blacklisted. Shoot at sight order was passed at Neelamani Singh and Koireng Singh. Many Manipuri civilians were killed or their properties were destroyed by the British forces. (source: Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: Contemporary Anecdotes, Reminiscences, and Wartime Reportage by Priyadarshi Mukherjee)

Capture of Palel Aerodrome

The second brigade reached Tamu on the Indo Burma trade route. The British forces were pushed back to India. A small detachment of their 1st Division was left at Moray, within Indian borders. Azad Hind Fauj moved ahead and established its HQ at Chamol. Gandhi Regiment HQ was established in Mitha Khanjoul. There was a heavy concentration of the British forces in this area. The enemy forces had HQ in Palel which had an aerodrome. The British troops had strong artillery and air support which the INA and the Japanese forces lacked. The Gandhi brigade troops had been positioned in the hills overlooking Manipur and had ten days worth of ration with them, with no transport or communication links provided to them by the Japanese, with their Regimental HQs. For any message the despatch runner had to cover a distance of 18 miles each way through the enemy ambushes and snipers lurking somewhere (Maj General A.C Chatterjee - India's Struggle for Freedom). The third Brigade, named as Azad Brigade, under Col. Gulzara Singh, had arrived in Rangoon in April 1944. They arrived in Tamu by end of May 1944 and were assigned to protect the right flank of the Japanese forces. The HQ of this brigade was in Mintha, north of Moray. They also occupied strategic positions. But before they could launch large scale operations, the rain set in. The Gandhi regiment was on the left flank of the Japanese army and was instructed not to kill or wound any of the Indians on the British side, in order to win them over. Japanese army had drawn up a plan for attacking the aerodrome in Palel. The aerodrome attacking troops were under the command of Major Pritam Singh, who was later

decorated with Sardar-e-Jung. While attacking a picket of British Indian soldiers, two of the INA men Lal Singh and Kapur Singh were treacherously killed by the British Indian troops who first asked them not to fire upon fellow Indians. A part of Major Pritam Singh's troop had captured the Palel aerodrome but the Japanese troops did not arrive as per plan to provide reinforcements. The INA men therefore destroyed the allied forces aeroplanes. During the day the enemy artillery and aircrafts resulted in heavy casualties on the INA Gandhi regiment. Major Pritam Singh, while getting encircled by enemies decided to retreat to the regimental HQ. The Japanese troop never arrived owing to a change in plan on their side which they did not communicate to the Indian counterpart. The men of Major Pritam Singh had to cut through an enemy barrier by desperate fighting and suffered heavy losses. Near the Regimental HQ of the Gandhi brigade British employed the Scottish Seaforth Highlanders. Repeated assaults and counter assaults resulted in casualties on both sides. The INA troops in these battles were largely composed of the Tamils from Malaya.

Suffering Reversal - Rain sets in: The Retreat or the Death March

Rains had come earlier and supply of arms and ammunition and rations became difficult. However the troops were fighting till the last drop of their blood. The fast advancement of Indo Japanese troop was resisted in Bishnupur. The enemy forces had numerical and logistical superiority, yet the INA men did not budge. Lt. Mansukh Lal, Capt. Rao, Lt. Ajaib Singh successfully defended the HQ. Even thirteen bullet wounds did not prevent Lt. Mansukh Lal from capturing the hill on which the safety of the regiment depended. Around 600 INA men fought tooth and nail against 3000 British soldiers with superior arms and equipment. Hand to hand combat took place in between Bishnupur and Ningthoukhong and the battle was the toughest and the bloodiest. The objective of the Indo Japanese forces was to capture the strongly fortified British camp at Bishnupur. On failing to capture it, Indo Japanese forces followed the Western Hill ranges and tried to block the British supplies at Red Hill at a cost of heavy casualties. British forces recaptured it after intense fight. Heavy rain started in July and Indo Japanese forces started retreating by mid July. The food shortage became acute and Col. I.J Kiani had to negotiate with the villagers regarding supply of food. The Nagas were disenchanted with the British and the Japanese alike, but they wanted their "Raja, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose" and they agreed to help. Nagas greatly resented the treatment of their Rani Guidinliu, Naga Spiritual and Political Leader in the hands of the British, who led the revolt against the British and who was imprisoned since 1932 in Shillong.

In the meanwhile the supply line collapsed and there was no bomber available from the Japanese. The Japanese forces, suffering reverses in the Pacific, had moved all their bombers to counter the American forces in a desperate bid to save their occupied territories. The American fighter planes soon launched one sided attack on the greatly depleted INA forces that were fighting for their lives to protect their occupied territories from Bishnupur to Kohima. INA advanced troops mobilized in Bishnupur were pounded by the enemy bombers continuously. The road from Moirang to Bishnupur was so heavily bombarded that it was not possible for the tanks of the INA forces to negotiate the route (Debnath Das, Battle of Imphal). Had it been few months earlier, the allied forces would not have been in a position to launch such a fierce aerial attack. The regimental strength dwindled to only thousand from two thousand. The enemy had received reinforcements and had abundant supply of food. Major B. J. S Garewal, the second in command of the Gandhi regiment and Major Prabhudayal, second in command of the third brigade under Col. Gulzara Singh, deserted to the enemy camps, carrying with them the detail documents pertaining to the positions of the INA soldiers. The Sikhs were crestfallen that Garewal, a Sikh, could bring such indignity of betrayal on them. Garewal paid for his karma as he was assassinated in the streets of Lahore after the war. But the British army now came to know the predicaments of the Indian soldiers on the other side. They began to drop leaflets asking for desertion, promising food, paid leaves and all other amenities. One such personalized leaflet reached I.J Kiani himself. Major Abid Hasan, the erstwhile secretary of Bose and his companion in the submarine voyage from Germany, a civilian turned soldier, replaced Garewal. He and his men broke through the encirclement. Later the whole brigade counter attacked the enemy lines and repulsed them. On account of their acts of bravery Major Hasan, Capt. Taj Mohammed and Lt. Rama Rao, received from Netaji the decoration of Sardar-e-Jung (Major Gen A.C Chatterjee, India's Struggle for Freedom).

Writes Peter Fay, "British greatly outnumbered him. They had three divisions at Imphal alone. They had tanks (one of Mutaguchi's columns had tanks too, but only a few), more guns than he could possibly manhandle or pack in, and much surer access to fuel and ammunition. Above all they had command of the air, and with it an airlift. INA had made a virtue of necessity, and brought with it food and ammunition for only three weeks. Surprise and elan, it had assured itself, would carry the day. They hadn't. Now it was stranded, out at the end of an enormously long and difficult line of supply." Mutaguchi, tending to his Rose Garden, could not realize British's game plan.

The military debacle was followed by one of the most excruciating retreat to Burma. On July 18, M.Z Kiani had ordered all regiments of the first division to withdraw from the

battle. Japan's decision to suspend India campaign was made public on July 26, the day Tojo resigned as the prime minister. Starvation and diseases took extra ordinary toll on the INA and the Japanese troops. The torrential rains, unavailability of food, extremely unhealthy climate, poisonous insects and diseases like malaria, diarrhea and dysentery led to the depletion of the forces as they proceeded along the hilly tracts of the Tiddim road. Shah Nawaz Khan in his memoirs had written the story of a soldier who was slowly dying and whose body was being devoured by insects and yet who asked his superior officer to go back and tell Netaji that he had kept his words to him, of dying for his motherland. The soldiers at first were loath to let go their gains but in the end they had to obey the orders, esp. since it was coming from their beloved Netaji. Col. Raja Mohammad Arshad and Zora Singh, a civilian, did exceptional work in arranging for transportation from Kalewa to Yeu. Col. Shaukat Malik took special care of the flag he hoisted in Moirang so that no disrespect to it should be shown by the allied forces when they reoccupy the territory. The troops reached Kalemyo on the border of Burma. The aerial bombing forced them to take cover in the dense forests during the daytime and trudge during the night. They were transported by trains that were driven by firewood and had open coaches, which were connected with the engine only at night for service.

Summing up the whole situation Shah Nawaz Khan, the Commander of the Subhas Brigade, writes: "Thus ended the main I.N.A. and Japanese offensive which had been started in March, 1944. During this period the I.N.A., with much inferior equipment and an extremely poor supply system, was able to advance as much as 150 miles into Indian territory. While the I.N.A. was on the offensive, there was not a single occasion on which our forces were defeated on the battlefield, and there was never an occasion when the enemy, despite their overwhelming superiority in men and material, was able to capture any post held by the I.N.A. On the other hand, there were very few cases where the I.N.A. attacked British posts and failed to capture them. In these operations the I.N.A. lost nearly 4,000 men as killed alone."

While summing up the heroism, courage and the outcome of the battles, Dr. R.C Majumdar quotes the memoirs of Shah Nawaz Khan to say that the INA troops had to suffer incredibly throughout their campaign because of insufficiency of transport and supplies. In Haka and Falam the rations were not available and had to be brought from the regimental HQ about 85 miles away. The INA troops had to climb up a mountainous region of 6000 ft high walking up to 16 miles every day to carry food to their comrades while Japanese garrison had coolies and animals for carrying. The ration was plain salt and rice. In bitter cold the men had one warm shirt and a thin blanket and spent whole

night sitting around the fire. There was an acute shortage of medicines and medical staff. The boots were in a poor state and some even had no boots. There were no mosquito nets protecting them against the insect bites and thus malaria. They went without food for days and survived on a mountainous grass called Lingra. When they reached Kohima rations were exhausted, their wounds were filled with maggots and out of terrible agony the men had to shoot themselves by uttering Jai Hind. The retreat from Kohima was disastrous as all tracks were washed away and men had to walk through knee deep mud in which many men got stuck and died. Almost everybody suffered from malaria and dysentery. Men had to eat rotten flesh of horses killed. The news of the order of retreat broke their spirit completely as they still had the hope of fighting the enemy and dying.

Writes Dr. Majumdar, "The incident is fully in keeping with the conduct of the I.N.A. soldiers throughout the campaign. Anyone who reads the history of this campaign is bound to be struck with one characteristic feature of the soldiers who dedicated their lives for the liberation of India. They were ready to risk everything, dare everything, and suffer and sacrifice to any extent in order to take part in liberating India." Dr. Majumdar does not however agree with the conclusion of Shah Nawaz Khan that the Japanese deliberately betrayed INA and Netaji as they were "frightened of making INA too powerful."



The INA Museum in Moirang near Imphal. This is the location where Shaukat Malik had raised the Azad Hind flag on 14th April 1944. The local Meitei community helped INA in capturing Moirang and Bishnupur

Azad Hind Government and Netaji during wartime - Address to Mahatma

When the news of the war was not reaching Netaji through Hikari Kikan, he decided to take the matters in his own hand and deputed three senior officers to proceed to the war zone - Lt. Col. Allagappan, A.C Chatterjee and Anand Mohan Sahay. They traveled by motorized vehicles along with money and rations to Kalewa, met the Azad Hind Dal under S. Chatterjee and Major Ghosh, and ensured effective functioning of the Dal to establish a base and a small hospital there. En route they encountered frequent aerial bombings but were miraculously saved. They reached Moray after passing Tamu on Indo Burma ancient trade route, and met D.M Khan and his Azad Hind Dal and got a glimpse of their motherland. Major Akbar Ali Shah who sacrificed his life while serving the INA men had set up his hospital in this base. They heard the complaints of supply shortage and misbehaviour of the Hikari Kikan officials. They met Col. Kiani in his divisional HQ in Chamole. They heard the stories of the bravery of the troops and the trust which the locals had on the INA men who had been engaged to settle local disputes until the Provisional Government took over formally. The locals also asked for the Azad Hind currency notes for their transactions. The team met the Japanese Divisional Commander Lt. Col. Fujiwara and apprised him of the many problems faced by the INA and the shortage of the supplies from the Japanese side. Fujiwara explained that the delay in the fall of Manipur had upset their plan and they had expected a much smaller size of the enemy. Secret Service men were engaged to gather information from behind the enemy lines, report to the regimental HQ and carry out propaganda work. The team returned to Maymyo by 7th June and submitted a report to Netaji. The Civil administration work was planned out. Each village was to be in charge of a mukhiya, each village would have a village panchayat with administrative powers, the villages were further organized into higher units and in this way a hierarchy of administration was formed with the Zilla at the top. There were administrative changes at the Government too. A ministry of revenue was formed under A.N Sarkar, the ministry of supply work was intensified and a ministry of transport was established. Provisions for the camping ground, water supply and sanitation of troops were established along with supply depots in advanced bases.

Between 4th and 11th of July the people across the South East Asia celebrated Netaji week to commemorate the anniversary of his taking over the Azad Hind leadership. Mass meetings were held and flag salutations were done. Tri Colour was flown from every house of the League members. In Rangoon a special parade was held, poor and destitute were fed and a demonstration was put up by the Ranis and the Bal senas in presence of Dr. Ba Maw and his cabinet colleagues. On 4th July Netaji addressed a large gathering of the civilians in Jubilee Hall in Rangoon and narrated the

achievements. In this meeting he had given his famous speech in which he told to the gathered men, "Give me blood and I promise you freedom." On 5th of July 1944, he addressed the Azad Hind troops and pointed out the hypocrisies in the British propaganda against the Azad Hind Fauj. He reminded them that the task of Azad Hind Fauj was to fight to liberate India and when India would become free Indian people would have the right to determine the Government of their choice.

On 6th July Netaji addressed Mahatma Gandhi over radio. Gandhiji was released from the captivity. Netaji offered a candid justification of the course that he took, told how the Indians outside India had implicit faith in Gandhi as they believed that he was the creator of the present awakening of the country, and how he was lauded by all the countries free from British influence in Asia. He said that the respect for Gandhi increased a "thousand fold" when he gave the call for 'Quit India'. He said that the British Government would never recognize India's demand for independence. He told that Britain's effort was to exploit India fully in her eagerness to win the war. He rightly interpreted that after the war Britain would be a protege of the United States. He said that he realized the futility of organizing an armed struggle from within India without help and support from outside. The outbreak of the war provided with such an opportunity and Netaji said that he had to find out if there was any merit in the propaganda that Axis powers were against freedom and therefore of India's freedom. He said that there was nothing wrong in seeking help from other countries in the struggle for independence as he did not find any single instance in which the enslaved people won freedom without external help. One could always take a help as a loan and pay the loan later (as Netaji himself did). He also saw nothing wrong in seeking help from other nations if a powerful British empire could go around with a begging bowl for help. He said that if he had the slightest hope to win freedom by remaining at home, he would have done so. He reminded Gandhi that not even his worst critics could say that he worked against the National interest and honour. In leaving India, he reminded Gandhi, that he had risked everything, including his life. He also assured Gandhi that if the cleverest and the cunning British politicians had failed to deceive him, nobody else could and therefore the speculation that the Axis powers were using him (Netaji) to meet their own selfish agenda was wholly unfounded. He also defended the attitude of Japan and explained to Gandhi that he was convinced that Japan's policy of Asia or Asians was sincere. He reminded Gandhi that Britain and America were not fighting in Chunking China against Japan out of altruistic motives and they would extract their pound of flesh. He reminded Gandhi that if Japan fell, the control of China would pass on to the Americas. He also asked him to consider that if indeed Japan had wrong intentions about India it did not have to support the Provisional Azad Hind Government or pass over Andaman and

Nicobar and other occupied territories to it. He informed Gandhi of the tremendous sacrifices of the Indians of East Asia to the cause of the Indian freedom struggle. He told Gandhi in clear terms that once the provisional Government had achieved its objective, people of India would have right to determine their own Government and many of Netaji's own people would retire from the political field, since their only desire was to set India free. He said that it was more honourable to be even a sweeper in free India than to have the highest position under the British rule. He told Gandhi that India's war of independence had begun and the Azad Hind Fauj was fighting bravely on the soil of India and despite all the hardships and privations they were marching steadily towards their goal. His last sentence was, "**Father of our Nation! In this holy war for India's liberation, we ask for your blessings and good wishes.**"

Peter Fay rightly sums up in The Forgotten Army, about Netaji, "Always he behaved, and asked Indians to behave, not as he and they were at the moment but as he and they meant to be one day. Always he moved to meet the future with an anticipation, an assertion, a posture (his critics regularly accuse him of striking poses), because he believed—it was also his experience—that in this manner the future might not simply be brought forward. It could actually be determined and shaped."

The road to Delhi is the road to freedom..On to Delhi (Chalo Dilli)

Aftermath of the Battles – Reorg of INA and Azad Hind

In Oi Mahamanab Ase a great thinker and military strategist had remarked (translated from original Bengali), "I had great hope that when we cross Burma, Bengal will rise like a single person - To a man. When the British commander was trying to despatch the signed surrender information of the Staff Command in a sealed envelope - that we (the British) are surrendering, at that very moment four men entered there. So order went to the front, 'Do not surrender, their condition is unenviable, pitiable.' Wheel of fortune turned." He was possibly referring to the desertion from INA that resulted in turning the tide in favour of the Allied forces in Imphal. The inability of the Japanese and the INA to break through into Assam and Bengal also undermined the strategy of fomenting internal revolutions through secret service activities from the Indian cities. The secret service agents sent, including S.N Chopra and Dr. Pabitramohan Roy were captured owing to betrayals. At least 23 secret agents were sentenced to death. INA had also

lost the propaganda war to the British as no news regarding their tremendous feat and the defeat of the allied forces in the North Eastern hills was allowed to be circulated. Instead people of India had got an impression that British were locked in a desperate battle with Japanese and Netaji's troops mainly acted as the fifth column of the Japanese. Together with the British the communists also carried out the same propaganda and it was impossible for ordinary people to get the true picture of the heroism of the INA.

The withdrawal of troops had started from all the fronts. **INA was not defeated, it was still victorious**, but it did not have supply lines, its soldiers were worn out from fatigue and diseases, and rains and aerial attacks would lead to a decimation on the plains as enemy had been able to reinforce their supplies. Therefore it was decided not to go ahead with the attack of Imphal and instead return to the base camps. As per the narratives of Maj. Gen. A.C Chatterjee, "troops from Kohima front under Lt. Col. Shah Nawaz Khan came down on foot as far as Sittang, from where they went to Chindwin river and crossed over to Kindat. from there a large no. of them went by foot along the river and reached Kalewa and then to Budlin. Men carried sick men and many of them perished on the way. This march will ever remain an epic of willing suffering, determination and patriotism."

Troops under Lt. Col. I.J Kiani came down the Manipur Hills to Moray, to the Sittang or Kabaw valley and went to Yeu. Troops under Col. S.A Malik came down via Tiddim to Kalewa and crossed Chindwin. The troops that greatly suffered were ordered to proceed directly to Mandalay and were admitted in the hospital in Mandalay. Those who were serious were sent to the base hospital in Maymyo. Other parts of the troops, mainly from first and third brigades had taken up defensive position at Budlin and Minjun to check enemy advance. The enemy however could not take much advantage of the retreat. Netaji publicly admitted the failure of the Imphal offensive in a radio address from Rangoon on August 21. He blamed the early onset of the monsoon for the debacle. He summarized that until the rains began, INA had held the enemy in Arakan, Haka-Falam, advanced in Kaladan, Tiddim, captured Palel aerodrome and went until Kohima, raised flag in Moirang and held Bishnupur against a well-equipped enemy that vastly outnumbered INA. He vowed to regroup to fight the next round.

Netaji came to visit the patients in the hospital by September. He was deeply affected by hearing their stories of a miserable retreat, the sufferings and the losses. The troops were beside with joy by seeing Netaji coming to visit them. Netaji visited several camps and raised the morale of the troops who were raring to go back to fight again on

recovery. The nurses of the Rani Jhansi regiment like Bela Dutta did a stellar job of looking after the wounded and the sick, hastening their recovery. Rallies and meetings were held to rouse the enthusiasm and the motivation of the civilians who were disappointed by the failure of the troops to achieve their objective. Netaji also visited the Maymyo and stayed there looking after the expansion of the hospital. Netaji arranged for entertainment sessions for the troops and sat down for a special dinner with them. The British air forces now started mission to attack the INA bases in Mandalay and Maymyo. In several cases INA men and Rani of Jhansi troops were saved miraculously from being bombed, even though their buildings got destroyed. Intelligence reports were received regarding the advance of the enemy to the east bank of the Chindwin river. Netaji and his key men moved to Rangoon. Netaji held a cabinet meeting in Rangoon. He summarized that the INA had learned through the "baptism of fire". He cited the desertions of British Indian troops to INA and also highlighted the positive developments like the increase in confidence of the Japanese leadership on the combat capabilities of INA, obtaining information about the strength of the enemy and reiterated the weak points like the supply, transport and lack of propaganda units in the front. The cabinet decided unanimously to continue with the struggle until India got her liberation. Netaji decided to form a small war council which was made the sole coordinating authority for all war efforts. A.C Chatterjee was its Secretary and later that role was taken up by M.Z Kiani as Chatterjee had to take up the work of the Foreign Office. The council consisted of, apart from Netaji himself and Chatterjee, Bhonsle, M.Z Kiani, Col. Aziz Ahmed, Col. Ehsan Qadir, Col. Habibur Rahman, Col. Gulzara Singh, Paramanand, N. Raghavan, Col. I.J Kiani, and Shah Nawaz Khan. On October 9, Bose had an invitation from Japan's new prime minister General Koiso, requesting him to visit Tokyo. Netaji also decorated his soldiers in a special ceremony and awarded many of them posthumously for their exceptional bravery. He again encouraged the civilians for total mobilization as the troops would redouble their effort to capture Imphal.

Azad Hind Day and the Provisional Government Day celebration rallies were planned between 16th and 22nd October. On 18th October, Netaji had a miraculous escape in Rangoon. While reviewing his troops in the parade ground at Mingaladon outside Rangoon, he was standing on a big raised platform. High ranking army officers were standing behind him and huge Tri colours were flying. Japanese aeroplanes were flying overhead to defend against any possible incursion. About 4000 troops were paraded. An enemy bomber appeared suddenly and the pilot fired a machine gun in front of him to the cars, no shot was fired on the troops that were marching. Netaji refused to come down despite repeated pleas from his men as he had firmed up his mind to die standing and facing the impending death rather than succumbing to it while trying to escape. Anti

aircraft guns of the Japanese tried to take the plane down but failed. One INA man was killed by a deflected AAG fire. Another enemy plane appeared and Netaji issued an order for the dispersal of his parading troop to ensure their safety. Enemy started firing machine guns and dropped grenades but not a single INA man was injured and Netaji was safe. Evidently there were British spies around who had informed their bosses on the parade.

Azad Hind Government now took up the job of equipping its own men with the transports needed. Since motorized transports were largely unavailable, bullock carts were used and depots were created at suitable distances. Paramanand became the new minister of Supplies. They received a lot of help from the local Sindhi merchants who had volunteered to serve in the Azad Hind Dal. Netaji visited Tokyo with Maj. Gen. Kiani, Col. Habibur Rahman and Maj. Gen. A.C Chatterjee. He wanted to take his other officers but could not do so on account of non availability of suitable transport. They stopped in Bangkok and Saigon, and reached Hainan. According to Maj. Gen A.C Chatterjee, there they met a few prisoners of war of the Japanese who wanted to join the INA. Netaji also donated two thousand dollars for a Japanese hospital. They reached Tokyo after passing through Taihoku. In the aerodrome in Tokyo there was a large gathering of the Japanese civil and military officers including Sugiyama, the war minister and Shigemitsu, the foreign minister. This proved the status and the respect that the Japanese accorded to Netaji despite the apparent debacle. Netaji met the premier on the very first day of his ten day stay and met the other ministries like the Foreign Office, the war Office, Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Navy. A state dinner was given by the premier, Gen. Koiso who reaffirmed Japan's vow to help in the liberation of India. He also affirmed that Japan had no material interest or ambitions in India and did not want any special favour in return for the help. Another dinner was given by Shigemitsu. Prof. Toyoma, of the Black Dragon Society, who had given shelter to Rash Behari Bose, had died couple of days earlier. His deputy came to meet Netaji. Tojo presented a sword to Netaji. Netaji also met the famous Japanese poet Noguchi. The highlight of the visit to Tokyo was an audience by the Japanese emperor Hirohito to Netaji.

Major General A.C Chatterjee recalls in his book that Intense negotiations were carried out in the next few days in the Imperial Hotel of Tokyo where the guests were shifted from the Foreign Office guest house. It was decided that the Japanese Government would continue give all out support to the Azad Hind Provisional Government in its struggle for the independence of India, The Provisional Government would establish a department of foreign affairs for the direct negotiation of all political matters with the

Tokyo and this branch of Hikari Kikan should be abolished as far as India was concerned. A large supply of medicines were provided to the Azad Hind Government. The team of visitors also went to visit the places of importance for a new India that they envisioned, like the educational institutions and the universities, facilities of military training, hospitals and research institutes, and were impressed by the advancements made by Japan, esp. in providing nutritional food to its citizens, including the foreigners. Netaji was very glad to meet his Tokyo cadets in the Military Academy, a select group of young men whom he had hand picked for military and air force training in Tokyo for the future needs of the INA, from Malaya, Burma and Singapore. He had an interaction session with each of them and also took dinner with them. Netaji also addressed the students and the faculty of the Tokyo University. He pointed out that after independence the main battles facing India would be national defence, poverty eradication and providing education for all. He also advocated regional cooperation and urged Japan to take the lead in Asia. From Tokyo, the team went to Shanghai where a public reception was given to the Netaji by the members of the Indian Independence League and the Indian community, which was also attended by the Mayor of Shanghai and Chinese and Japanese military authorities. Netaji also reviewed the performance of the members of the Azad Hind Volunteer force. Medicines and Drugs worth million yens were purchased from Bayer & Co. and were despatched to Singapore. Netaji also reviewed the contingent of the Rani of Jhansi regiment under training in Shanghai. New men were inducted from among the civilian volunteers. The training centres in Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Singapore and Rangoon were enhanced and intake were increased. The number of men reached almost fifty thousand and the second division of the Fauj was sent to the Burma front. A division three was set up under Col G.R Nagar.

Netaji wanted to establish contact with Russia and he had asked Anand Mohan Sahay to meet Russian Ambassador to Japan, Jacob (Yakov) Malik. From Tokyo, Netaji also tried to make a series of broadcasts to the United States and told his American friends that he had to take help from Japan since no other superpower came forward to help India. There are other unconfirmed reports that say that he himself met Jacob (Yakov) Malik and sought Russia's help in continuing with the revolutionary activities of his army. As an astute military and political observer, he knew that the days of the Japanese were numbered and they would not be in a position to help much in the long run. He reached out to USA to soften their stance on INA, but to continue fighting his army needed money, equipment and above all large quantities of sophisticated arms and ammunition which could only be obtained from Russia. There are other unverified documentary claims that in December 1944, he himself went to Russia for three weeks and met Stalin to make arrangements for his future plan (of escaping to Russia in the event Japan

surrendered to the Allied forces). But this is not reflected in any of the contemporary memoirs or letters. Writes Kanailal Basu in his book *Netaji: Rediscovered*, that Prof. Purabi Roy handed over a copy of a letter written by Netaji to Yakov Malik in Nov 1944, to Col. Hugh Toye, which greatly surprised Toye as he was not aware of it.

On Nov 29 he wrote a letter to the Tokyo cadet students that "he had no son of his own" and they were more than sons to him as they had dedicated their lives to the cause that was the one and only one goal of his life, to liberate India. Netaji returned to Burma on January 10, en route via Bangkok.

Rashbehari Bose, the architect of INA and one of the key revolutionaries who had dreamt of a free India and gave his life for that cause, died on 21st January in a hospital in Tokyo. His son had died in the battle and his daughter was with his in laws. He was honoured by the Japanese Emperor Hirohito with the second order of the merit decoration and the Emperor sent the royal vehicle for carrying his body. Subhas ordered all the flags of the provisional Government to fly half-mast in recognition of the great loss. M.Z Kiani presided over a condolence meeting by the war council.

After his return from his long trip, Netaji at a press conference reminded the assembled newsmen that the war had proceeded by stages. "The Anglo-Americans are overextended," he said. "Their losses at sea and in the sky have been enormous, and cannot easily be replaced. In any case, it is not material power that will decide this conflict, but spiritual force—in which they are notoriously deficient. The third stage will be decisive. In it we Indians must play our rightful part. The struggle will be hard, harder than last year's, for in Burma the enemy's strength is more than it was and grows greater daily. But Imphal has taught us something precious. Imphal has taught us that we can defeat the British. Had the rains not intervened, we should by now have occupied the Manipur basin and be descending into the plains. Imphal has given us the knowledge and the certainty that in the fight for independence, which Indians at home will join as soon as they receive the call, we shall ultimately prevail. It is in this spirit of confidence that we enter the new year."

As per Azad Hind reports, on 8 January Netaji inaugurated a new dormitory for the orphans in Ramakrishna Mission Orphanage Home at 179, Bartley Road, in the presence of a large gathering of Indians. Swami Bhaswarananda, the president of the Ramakrishna Mission in Singapore said that the Orphanage was established at the request of Netaji himself and Indian Independence League had contributed \$ 30,000 for the construction of the building (source: Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian

Liberation Movement in East Asia, Priyadarshi Mukherjee). Netaji had lauded the work of the Mission in India and elsewhere and outlined his hope that the Home would also accommodate the children whose parents were looking forward to join the independence movement.

In the third week of January an intensive drive for funds collection was launched. A.C Chatterjee was sent to Bangkok for raising funds. A committee was established for celebrating the birthday of Netaji on a large scale, with Karim Ghani, and Habib as secretary and chairman resp. The main idea was to raise funds for the Government work. On 23rd January, 1945, Netaji's birthday was celebrated with great elan in Rangoon and against the wishes of Netaji it was decided by his admirers to collect funds in gold equivalent to his weight. More than double that quantity was collected. Writes S. A. Ayer in the "Story of I.N.A", "They (People) organised the celebration of a Netaji Week on a grand scale in Rangoon. Netaji stood on the dais flanked by his ministers. An unending procession of men, women and children walked up to the dais and presented him with trays laden with gold and silver, jewelry and trinkets. Some young men from the Janbaaz or suicide squad, who had nothing else in this world to offer gave a pledge written in blood, offering their lives at the altar of their motherland. This was the symbolic response of Indian youth in all East Asia to Netaji's call: "Give me blood and I will give you freedom." Major Swami and his special group were active for sabotaging the allied pipeline in North Burma. Bose devised an elaborate plan with Swami to send agents with wireless sets behind the enemy lines.

The Government of Siam under Maj. Khuong Aphoyvongse, invited Netaji for a state visit to Siam. Subhas was given a huge reception in Siam between 16 and 19 January. He also carried out major restructuring in his organization. February 4 was regarded as Army Day and INA commemorated its success in Imphal. A.C Chatterjee was appointed as a Foreign Minister by Netaji on February 5, 1945. He was also elevated to the rank of Major General along with Bhonsle, Kiani and Loganadhan. Netaji also promoted Shah Nawaz Khan, Gulzara Singh, Habibur Rahman, Aziz Ahmed, G.R Nagar and Allagappan to full Colonel rank. Netaji arrived in Bangkok with Habibur Rahman and S.A Ayer and was received by the premier and the high ranking officials with a Guard of Honour. He paid a courtesy call to the regent of the minor king. A State Banquet and a Cultural Programme was organized for him by the Premier. The Indian community was also present in large number and felicitated Netaji. Afterwards Maj. General Chatterjee stayed back for the collection of funds and Netaji returned to Rangoon. Mr. Hachiyya, Japanese Ambassador had arrived in Rangoon but Netaji did not want to meet him until he had the credentials like the letter of authority from the Japanese

Government. This was the first time that Japan had to present credentials for an Ambassador or its Minister to a Provisional Government. This again demonstrates the amount of respect and importance that the Japanese gave to Netaji. It took sometime before the documents arrived. On 1 February, Netaji donated a sum of Rs 500,000 to the Burmese National Defence fund.

British forces were by now advancing rapidly to Burma. They were nearing the Chindwin river and had taken up positions on the banks of the Irrawaddy river. Hospitals in the Maymyo were being evacuated in anticipation of an attack. Mandalay had been fortified for a prolonged defence. The hospital at Monywa was closed and transferred to the Ziwawadi. It was decided to send the no. 2 division to the Popa Hills.



The sword presented to Netaji by Tojo



With Japanese Premier Hideki Tojo



Netaji in Tokyo



With Tokyo Cadets in Tokyo Military Academy, Netaji in the front row



The Leader inspecting the front



Taking Guard of Honour from the Rani of Jhansi Brigade



With Major Gen. A.C Chatterjee, Maj. Gen M.Z Kiani & Col. Habibur Rahman

Give me blood and I promise you freedom!

The Last Battles - Retreat

In a great rally in Rangoon's city Hall, Netaji had asked for "Blood, blood, blood and blood." Bidders pledged princely sums for the garlands worn by him. On the same day British had crossed the Iravati river north of Mandalay. As per The Forgotten Army, "Subhas Brigade, or what was left of it, had spent the early autumn at Budalin, south of Yeu. The Azad had been billeted at Chaungu, still further south, the Gandhi (reduced to one battalion) at Mandalay. In November all three were ordered to Pyinmana, 150 miles below Mandalay on the main road and rail line to Rangoon. There, in a camp much closer to the freedom army's chief source of supply, these skeleton regiments would, it was hoped, recover something like their former strength. They went by rail, a difficult and dangerous business requiring weeks, for by this time British tactical aircraft from airstrips in the Manipur basin and the Kabaw Valley were hitting bridges and rolling stock as far south as Meiktila. Nothing moved by day. At first light troop trains stopped, if possible in cuttings; the precious engines were run into pens made of woven bamboo filled with rocks; the men scattered and slept. The 4th (Nehru) Regiment did not accompany the other three. It had been brought as far as Mandalay, but too late to take part in the Imphal campaign. Now it moved southwest, to Myingyan, where the Chindwin joins the Irrawaddy." Lt. Col. Thakur Singh, who was the second in command of the 1st regiment under Major Shah Nawaz Khan, was selected for commanding a new regiment formed from the remnants of the first division. Col. R. M Arshad was put in charge of the remaining person of the 1st division. Netaji took Maj. Gen M.Z Kiani to Rangoon where he was appointed as the secretary of the war council. Commanders were to certify as to the spiritual fitness of their men before taking them into an operational area. This was needed to protect the army from the infiltrators and the traitors. Although most of the INA men were staunch loyalists, there were a few like Prabhudayal and Garewal who had inflicted enough damage to the prospects. Yet desertions from INA were surprisingly low. Writes Peter Fay, "But surrenders were never the flood the British assumed they would be. "In spite of Japanese reversals on the Arakan front," observed an intelligence summing up in the autumn of 1944, "our expectations that large numbers of the I.N.A. would desert were not realized." It was the same about the Manipur basin. In late July, intelligence reported that of the original 1,900 or so men in the Gandhi Brigade only 650 were still present for duty. But that was not because the rest had deserted. "Up to 30 June only 116 had surrendered or been captured." The rest were sick, and sickness was not confined to the Gandhi. In one battalion of the Azad Brigade, this July report went on, "a daily strength return at the end of June showed that of approximately 600 men hardly more than 300 were present; 250 were sick in the back areas; 12 had deserted; 3 had committed suicide; and 3 were casualties." Of course it

wasn't all that easy to surrender. It couldn't be done at all unless you were reasonably close to a British position, and there was always the chance you'd be shot by mistake. But whatever the reason, mass desertion did not occur. "Only some 700 of the I.N.A. have come into our hands since the end of February," the autumn summing up continued. And of these 700 how many, one wonders, were men who deliberately set out to surrender and how many were men who, exhausted, wounded, straggling, or lost, saw that they were going to fall into the hands of the British anyway, and decided to act as if it had always been their dearest wish?" Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon was given the charge of countering the advancing British forces at the Iravati river. He had under him many Tamil recruits from Malaya who had once revolted in their training camps because of language problems and treatment meted out to them by their superiors from the North. At the time of Imphal campaign, Dhillon was serving with the 5th guerrilla regiment which was under training at Ipoh. He later was with the 1st Infantry which was the oldest regiment of the INA, and had the heaviest weapons. It had started for the front in May 1944 and was transferring the heavy weapons by the sea. The ship by which these weapons were carried were torpedoed and the weapons were all lost. The regiment was unfit to proceed further. Dhillon wanted to be in the field and Aziz Ahmed, who commanded the second division, sent him to Netaji who had private conversations with him. Dhillon was put in charge of the Nehru regiment. He and his troops were in Myingyan, with the task of making it defensible. Prem Sahgal, who was also in the staff as military secretary to the Supreme Commander, took over the 5th guerrilla regiment and was sent to Mount Popa. Mehboob Ahmed or Boobie, took over as the new military secretary. The second division was supposed to be led by Maj. Gen Aziz Ahmed Khan, but he was critically injured.

Allied bombers were reigning the skies of the Burma. On February 10, 1945, five waves of American B 29s dropped conventional and incendiary bombs on the INA hospital in Myang and razed it to the ground. Hospital was clearly written and the Red Cross sign was prominent, but the democratic and human rights activist Americans, who thought it was their moral duty to police half the world, did not spare even the sick. Many patients were killed and the survivors had to be rushed to the general hospital in Rangoon. Maj. Gen. Aziz Ahmed received a head injury and was out of action. Netaji rushed to the site, despite his severe back pain, and personally supervised the rescue operation. He visited daily the burnt victims in the hospital and ensured best possible medical care for them. S.A. Ayer said, "I am still hoping that one day the Americans will tell the world the real reason for their blasting and burning the I.N.A hospital in Myang (Rangoon), on Saturday, 10th February, 1945."

The enemy forces, in the meanwhile, had launched a surprise attack by crossing Irrawaddy near Myingyan with a mechanized force. The force had proceeded towards Meiktila. Enemy planes bombed several aerodromes in Meiktila. On February 18, Netaji departed for the battlefield to the north. He reviewed the defense in Pyinmana. No. 1 Division was there, while no. 2 was in Kyaukpadang and Popa. Netaji asked Shah Nawaz to take over the command of the no. 2 division in Popa. With Netaji and Mehboob Ahmed, Shah Nawaz went to Meiktila. On 20th February the group reached a village Indaw. They received the news that British had advanced from Nyaunggu by breaking through the INA defence. Mandalay had fallen to the allied forces and the enemy troops were advancing along Mandalay-Meiktila-Rangoon road. The Supreme Commander of the INA was almost within the reach of the enemy forces. To bring more information Shah Nawaz and Mehboob Ahmed proceeded to Mount Popa.

Netaji did an inspection of the INA hospitals at Kalaw and Taunggyi and made sure that the hospitals were removed to Ziwawadi near Rangoon. Netaji wanted to go to Popa but was prevented from doing so by Shah Nawaz and Rawat, his adjutant, who ensured a tactical delay to prevent Netaji from setting off at night. Netaji had a firm belief that he was divinely protected and he had said so to Shah Nawaz when the latter had rebuked him for trying to put his (Netaji's own) valuable life at risk. They started early in the morning by car. Netaji and his companions managed to evade the heavy aerial bombing and the machine guns of the enemy aircraft, in a daring journey with a loaded Tommy gun, couple of hand grenades and a loaded Bren gun. They reached the village called Indaw without any incident. The enemy aircrafts came and started heavy bombing and machine gun firing. The villages were full of British spies and hence Netaji and his companions decided to stay in a forested area. The enemy aeroplanes could not find him despite making continuous sorties. Shah Nawaz went to Meiktila to get the men out and Netaji reached Pyinmana on February 27. William Slim of the allied forces had aspired to capture Meiktila and had sent Frank Messervy for the task. General Heitaro Kimura, who had replaced Kawabe as the commander in Burma, had launched a major onslaught, hoping to hold the British till the onset of the monsoon, and had encircled the British 17th division in Meiktila. On March 2, Bose returned to Rangoon and received the news that four senior officers of the second division had deserted to the British at Popa. He gave Shah Nawaz, who was commanding the second division, a free hand in choosing the best men as staff officers, and Shah Nawaz selected majors Ram Swarup, Meher Das Sardar-e-Jung, Ajaib Singh and B.S Rawat, and proceeded towards Popa on March 7. On 12th March they reached Mount Popa.

The second division had been fighting a tough battle near Iravati. It had about 1500 men. The enemy had crossed Iravati and was nearing Mandalay. One division was in Sagaing and set up bases in Minbu. Another division had crossed Kalemyo, Gangaw valley and were trying to cross Iravati near Nyangu and Pagan. Dhillon entrusted Lt. Hariram to guard Nyangu with no. 7 battalion, and put Lt. Chandrabhan in charge of no. 9 battalion to guard Pagan. No. 8 battalion was kept as reserved. On the night of 12th February the enemy reached the Pagan. The enemy, under heavy artillery cover, wanted to cross over in motor boats. Lt. Chandrabhan and his men fought a determined battle. Repeated attacks of the enemy were repulsed with machine gun fires that continued throughout the night. Col. Toye in his book The Springing Tiger had admitted, "Many of the boats were soon out of control and drifting downstream past the I.N.A trenches for which they made perfect targets. There were many casualties, although some of the craft returned to the western bank and many men escaped by swimming." The next day they had sent their air forces to drop incendiary bombs and carry out machine gun attacks on the INA positions. Then they started heavy artillery attack and captured a Japanese post, thus setting their foot on the east bank of Iravati. By this time the ammunition of the Azad Hind forces was almost over. Hariram had crossed over to the British side thus causing irreparable damage to the INA positions. By 14th February, the entire enemy division had crossed Iravati. Chandrabhan had still kept his guard. Dhillon, seeing the impossibility of battle situation, decided to send his men to Popa and Kyaukpadang. Major Jageer Singh, Dhillon's second in command, came to Kyaukpadang and organized his troops and supply base. When Subhas heard about the desertion of Hariram, he issued a stern command - "Every member of the INA officer, NCO or Sepoy, will in future be entitled to arrest any other member of the INA, no matter what his rank may be, if he behaves in a cowardly manner, or to shoot him, if he acts in a treacherous manner." Subhas also asked Dhillon to ensure that his men should be able to compensate for the treachery of Hariram. According to Hugh Toye in The Springing Tiger, he wrote to Dhillon on 21st February a message that was hand delivered by Shah Nawaz, "I have heard with grief, pain and shame of the treachery shown by Lt. Hariram and others. I hope that the men of the 4th Regiment will wash away the blot on the INA with their blood." Bose had given an instruction to the INA police in Mandalay to arrest any deserter and send down to Rangoon under escort or shoot them at sight if arrest cannot be made (Hugh Toye).

As per the plan of Shah Nawaz Khan, the no. 2 infantry division under P.K Sahgal would be prepared to face the enemy in Popa and the no. 4 regiment of Dhillon would conduct guerrilla warfare on the enemy from Taungzin area, on the Kaukpadang-Nyangu road. On 11th March Dhillon and his men attacked Nyangu. There was no messaging system,

no wireless communication, only "runners" and despatch riders used to send all communication for INA. Netaji wrote to G.S Dhillon on 12th March - "I have been following the work of your Regiment and of yourself with the closest interest and I want to congratulate you on the manner in which you have stood up to face bravely the situation that is difficult. I want to express my complete confidence in you and in all those who are standing by you in the present crisis. Whatever happens to us individually in the course of this historic struggle, there is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved any longer. Whether we live and work, or whether we die fighting, we must under all circumstances, have complete confidence that the cause for which we are striving is bound to triumph."

Azad Hind Fauj, despite the great difficulties, despite lack of arms and ammunition and supply, despite the smaller number of army men, still had hidden some tough fights in its sleeves. On 16th March Captain Khan Mohammad led the attack on the enemy camps at Sade hills. Many of his men did not even have boots and yet they had not given up on their sacred duty to fight and die. His party of men crawled over boulders and rocks along an extremely steep side and despite heavy enemy firings, engaged in a hand to hand combat with the enemy. The enemy meanwhile had got reinforcements and had encircled Khan Mohammad and his men. The sick and infirm soldiers that Khan Mohammad had kept as reserve in the base of the hill, started firing on the enemy, who soon had to give up and escape. This gave the INA strategic advantage of a position. At least 500 people of the enemy were killed whereas the casualty on INA side was 17 only. Khan Mohammad returned to the HQ after conquering Sade hills. This was one of the toughest battles and best win of the INA. This had forced the British commander to launch a massive attack on INA. On 17th March, the 'A' Company of INA under Lt. Kartar Singh and 'B' Company under Gian Singh Bisht, had put up a defensive position near Taungzin. The enemy launched a vicious attack with tanks and infantry. About 15 tanks, 11 armoured vehicles and 10 trucks of the enemy started heavy artillery firing on the INA positions. Second Lt. Gian Singh's army had only rifles and about 100 odd men. Still they held to their grounds. When the enemy had come nearby, Gian Singh realized that battling from trench would not help. He therefore asked his men to charge against the advancing enemy with shouts like Inqilab Zindabad, Netaji Ki Jai, Azad Hindustan Zindabad, and carried out a hand to hand assault. After intense fighting for almost two hours the enemy had to escape, but Gian Singh sacrificed his life. The other part of the enemy that had launched an attack on the 'A' company, also had to beat a hasty retreat when their tanks were immobilized by fire. Taungzin remained with INA. Sub officer Abdullah Khan attacked a mechanized enemy patrol near the village of Daungle and dispersed the enemy.



Mount Popa – The witness of the life and death battle between Azad Hind Fauj and British Indian Army. Image courtesy The Forgotten Army

No. 2 division of Col. Sahgal was ordered to attack Pyinbin on 30th March. Intense battle followed in which Sahgal's jeep was attacked. He won the battle but lost important and vital documents to the enemy, who came to know of all the INA positions. There were other heroic feats too. Capt. Bagri, on 30th March, saved a Japanese company from being annihilated by a numerically much superior enemy force. Kanwal Singh and his men distinguished themselves in the battle of Legyi in early April. But in spite of these determined and desperate acts of bravery, position of INA was growing precarious. The enemy had now moved deep inside Burma. They had occupied Meiktila and was advancing along Mandalay Rangoon road. Kyaukpadang, Taundwingyi and Taungtha fell to the enemy, which had advanced till Prome. The enemy had vastly superior numbers, mechanized forces and airpower and INA had none to fight with. Mount Popa had to be abandoned and Col. Sahgal's men had to be split into two columns while retreating. On 10th April, British had bombed the INA field hospital at Kyaukpadang, killing many. On April 20, Captain Bagri's battalion faced a formidable challenge near Taundwingyi. An entire division of tanks and armoured vehicles had

been advancing against them and they had only rifles and grenades to fight. Capt. Bagri and his men gave up their lives by fighting with hand grenades against tanks, instead of surrendering. General Gracey, leading the attack on them, was stunned by the dare devilry.

The war situation in general had become extremely unfavourable for Japan. United States Army, led by General Douglas MacArthur had landed in Leyte in October 1944. The Allied forces led by US had neutralized many of Japan's strategic bases on the Pacific through bombardments and submarine attacks. By early 1945 United States defeated Japan in the battle of Iwo Jima. America also undertook intense bombing campaign using its air force and dropped incendiary bombs on the Japanese cities. Between March 9 and 10, Tokyo was raided, that led to the death of one hundred thousand civilians (source: Wikipedia). Another half a million people perished by the bombings in other Japanese cities.

In Burma the Burmese Defence Army under Aung San had revolted. The Japanese had not treated the Burmese army well. Burma was suffering under a severe inflation and lack of essentials. Burma Defence Army was rechristened as Burma National Army after independence. Japan had equipped them and they were mostly under Japanese military leadership. Burma Defence Army was composed entirely of the ethnic Burmese who had no prior military experience. No Indians were enlisted there. They wore Japanese uniform, carried Japanese rifle, went to Japan's military school and Japanese treated them harshly. The treatment was widely resented. For over a year Aung San and his army lived and worked side by side with the Indian National Army and Subhas Bose with a common purpose. It revolted in the nick of the time when the Japanese most needed them in Burma. Writes Peter Fay, " Because of this volte-face, shrewdly timed and artfully executed, made Aung San the hero of his country's independence movement." He continues, "while Bose and his people have always laboured under the reputation of being opportunists" to the British, "this behavior left no mark upon Aung San's reputation."

Ba Maw was inept in handling the resentment among the rank and files. He was too close to the Japanese. Major Gen. Aung San, who had given indications of his change of stance to Netaji, revolted, defected on 27th March, and killed all the Japanese officers attached to them. However, the relationship between Burmese National army and Indian National Army remained friendly, largely on account of mutual understanding between Netaji and Aung San. Supply system of the Japanese broke down because of the activities of the Burmese National Army, which led to the collapse of the Japanese

forces after losing Meiktila. Writes John Thivy in his book, The Struggle in East Asia, "A part of the Burmese National Army revolted against the Burmese Government and fought against their own troops, the Japanese and generally indulged in armed dacoity. It may be mentioned here that wherever units of the Indian National Army camped on their way to the fighting fronts, or established bases, the villagers would, if they had previously gone into hiding in the jungles, returned to the villages, secure in the knowledge that they will be protected."

The INA troops from Shan states and from Pyinmana tried to proceed to Moulmein. The ones from Pyinmana largely succeeded on account of the leadership of Col. Thakur Singh and Lt. Col Pritam Singh. Troops from Kalaw and Taungyi, a large part of whom were sick and weak, fell into the hands of the enemy. In Kalaw, Yellappa, Minister of Transport, was badly wounded in his legs by an allied bombing in a marketplace on 2nd March. Col. Dr. Lakshmi Swaminathan stayed with him to take care of him and brought him near Inle lake. On 6th of April a medical officer named Bawa appeared with a truck and medical supplies. Informed of Yellappa's plight, he had come up by way of Mawchi to bring them out. At Taunggyi, which was full of Japanese troops hurrying south, they joined a truck convoy, Lakshmi was attacked by a group of stragglers but escaped unhurt. They decided to stay in Mawchi in a Gurkha village. While traversing through the hills Lakshmi surrendered to a Col. Peacock. Yellappa was killed by a hand grenade thrown on his hut by the Karen soldiers of the British army. Prem Sahgal with his men marched during night to reach Allanmyo to continue to Prome. On 26 April he had reached Iravati near Allanmyo and discovered that the British were already there. There was an approaching Gurkha garrison and Prem and his six hundred men had to surrender or fight to death. Because of the request of the villagers to spare their village from the fight, they decided to surrender on 28th of April. Major General Douglas Gracey of the 20th Indian division told Prem when he met the latter, "What did you mean, you people, by going on fighting? We had armor, artillery. You chaps had nothing. But instead of surrendering, you fought. It was madness."

As per The Forgotten Army, On May 3, Shah Nawaz and Dhillon moved out of Magwe with couple of hundred men, when British arrived, and crossed the river and were heading from Rangoon when they heard that the Azad Hind Fauj men including Netaji have left for Moulmein. They pushed towards Pegu Yoma. There were dissent among the ranks and one of the Dhillon's men shot at him. Shah Nawaz had given permission to his men to turn themselves in if they wished. Majority did and they pushed on with a handful. By May 17 they were caught by the 5th Indian division near Pegu. Bose had

said to Shah Nawaz in March, "We have to continue fighting to uphold the honour of India."

On 20th April, Kimura advised Netaji of his intention of withdrawing from Rangoon. His army had been overrun by the 14th division of the British Indian Army at Toungoo, 100 miles north of Pegu. Netaji at first flatly rejected the idea of withdrawal. He wanted to fight till his last men. Two suicide companies, each two hundred and fifty strong, formed from the 1st battalion of the Subhas regiment, were sent to Moulmein. On April 23rd Bose was told about Japanese withdrawal and the escape of Ba Maw along with the Japanese. At first it was considered necessary to send the Rani of Jhansi regiment away from Rangoon. Netaji decided that every member who had come from Mandalay or Bangkok or other parts of South East Asia, should be given two months notice with full pay and sent away. The first batch of the Ranis left by the end of March. It was hard to convince them to move as they had left their homes to either gain independence or to die. Debnath Das was asked to leave with the first batch of RJR to Bangkok and keep them in a safe place and also find a safe road from Rangoon to Bangkok. About 150 RJR women accompanied Debnath Das, under the leadership of Lt. Pratima Pal and about hundred men under Captain Rawat. They had a miraculous escape from machine gun fires of the mercenaries. Unfortunately two women soldiers were killed - Havildar Josephine and Havildar Stella. Havildar Kamala was grievously injured and her left arm had to be amputated. Netaji also tried to secure the gradual evacuation of two to three thousand unfit men from Ziwawadi and Rangoon to Siam.

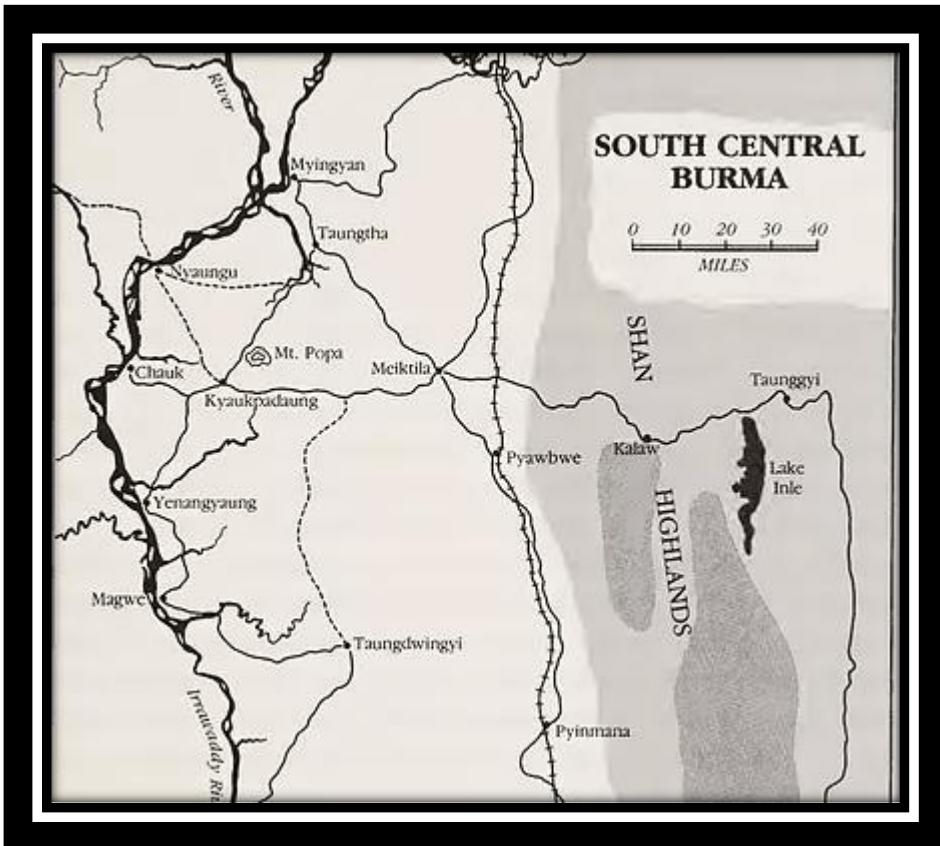


Image Courtesy: The Forgotten Army

When it became evident that Japanese intended to leave Rangoon and no further resistance to the allied forces was possible, Netaji called a cabinet meeting to have a discussion regarding the further strategy. Netaji said that he had decided to stay back in Rangoon and fight till the last and if needed die in the process. Cabinet rejected this and had the opinion that struggle should not be given up as yet. The third division under Col. G.R Nagar was still there in Malaya and more recruitment could happen if the Japanese supplied arms. It was possible to reorganize the army in Siam. Also it was possible to continue the battle of liberation from China or Russia. Netaji had to eventually give in to the proposal. Maj. Gen. Loganadhan who volunteered to stay back, was to preside over the INA surrender in Rangoon and was to make sure that Indians were not harassed. He was put in charge of the troops (about six thousand strong) and R.M Arshad became his chief of staff. The troops were provided with the supplies and the money they required from the Azad Hind Bank. Maj. Gen Loganadhan also ensured maintenance of law and order in Rangoon until the arrival of the British troops. A sum of five lakhs of rupees was donated to the provisional Government of Burma who had sought help. Writes Hugh Toye, "14th Division of the British Indian Army's drive southwards reached Pegu on April 28th, where in the nick of the time, the Japanese

had concentrated two makeshift brigade groups to cover the end of their withdrawal from Rangoon. The battle was ending on May 1st, when, two weeks early, the monsoon broke and halted the 14th Army's drive south. The last Japanese left Rangoon on 30th April." He continues, "Loganadhan's authority, which had perhaps helped preserve the order in the city, lasted until May 4th when the first assault craft reached the quay. On May 3rd, the senior British prisoner in Rangoon gaol had already ordered the disarming and concentration of the INA and this was in progress when 26th division arrived. The British army had curbed all INA slogans under threats but could not disarm the Bal Senas - both boys and girls, who would enthusiastically shout Jai Hind and would escape. There the estranged brothers met - like Col. K.S Thimayya of British Indian Force meeting his own brother K.P Thimayya of INA, who had joined the Reinforcement Group, who would put up a formal proposal for surrendering with dignity. Thus peacefully did the Indian independence movement in Burma came to an end, its leaders behaving with dignity and giving what assistance they could to the British commanders. Seven hundred and fifty of the ex Indian Army officers and men were shipped to India for investigation in May. They were followed, as the months passed, by many thousands more from Rangoon, from Malaya and Bangkok." Japanese forces continued to fight further north in the Pegu Yomas and prevented the British forces from pushing towards the Sittang Moulmein railway. The only way for Netaji to retreat was to go via Sittang to Moulmein and thereafter to Bangkok. A handpicked unit, about 500 strong, under Major Surajmal, were chosen to proceed by foot to Moulmein. They reached Pegu, crossed the Sittang river and reached Moulmein. About forty picked men of Azad Hind Dal and Azad Hind Fauj also marched along and reached Moulmein.

Bose, along with Major Swami, S.A. Ayer, A.C Chatterjee, J.K Bhonsle, M.Z Kiani, and the last batch of about 100 Ranis, started on April 24. He had asked for transportation for all his women fighters. At first they were supposed to be transported in a train, but they did not get an accommodation. Netaji was furious. After discussions with Isoda, the Japanese decided to provide a convoy of trucks for Ranis. About 4 cars and 12 trucks were provided, 3 of the trucks exclusively for the Ranis. Netaji risked a long and strenuous journey along with his men. Head of Hikari Kikan, Lt. Gen. Isoda and Ambassador Hachiyya went with him. Before leaving he delivered his final message to the Indians in Burma, to the Burmese Provisional Government, and to the Azad Hind Fauj. He thanked the Burmese Provisional Government and the people of Burma, for helping and supporting the Provisional Government of free India to carry on its struggles. To the Indian community he said, "I am leaving Burma with a very heavy heart. We have lost the first round of our fight for independence. But we have lost only the first round. There are many more rounds to be fought. In spite of our losing the first

round I see no reason for losing heart. You, my country men in Burma, have done your duty to your motherland in a way that has evoked the admiration of the world." He continued, "I have the fullest confidence that spirit can never be crushed." He assured them, " When the history of India's last war of independence comes to be written, Indians in Burma will have an honourable place in that history." He said, "I do not leave Burma of my own free will. I would have preferred to stay on here and share with you the sorrow of the temporary defeat. But on pressing advice of my ministers and high ranking officers, I have to leave Burma to continue the struggle for Indian's liberation. Being a born optimist, my unshakable faith in India's early emancipation remains unimpaired and I appeal to you to cherish the same optimism. I have always said that the darkest hours precede the dawn. We are now passing through the darkest hour; therefore the dawn is not far off. India shall be free." To Azad Hind Fauj his message was, "Brave officers and men of Azad Hind Fauj. It is with a heavy heart that I am leaving Burma, the scene of many heroic battles that you have fought since February, 1944 and are still fighting. In Imphal and Burma we have lost the first round in our fight for independence, but it is only the first round. I am a born optimist and I shall not admit defeat under any circumstances. Your brave deeds in the battles against the enemy on the planes of Imphal, the hills and the jungles of Arakan and the outfield area and other localities in Burma, will live in the history of our struggle for independence for all time. He continued, "At this critical hour I have only one word of command to give you, and that is that if you have to go down temporarily, then go down fighting with the national Tri Colour held aloft; go down as heroes; go down upholding the highest code of honour and discipline." His final words to them were, "My unshakable faith in India's liberation remains unimpaired... Indian shall be free and before long. May God bless you. Inqilab Zindabad, Azad Hind Zindabad, Jai Hind."

"A true revolutionary is one who never acknowledges defeat, who never feels depressed or disheartened. A true revolutionary believes in the justice of his cause and is confident that his cause is bound to prevail in the long run"

The Disappearance and Beyond

The Great Tactical Retreat

Late evening of 24th April, a moonlit night, saw the convoy of trucks and cars leaving Rangoon. The cars and trucks were camouflaged with foliage to hid themselves from the frequent sorties of the bombers. The progress was slow as every hour the party had to jump out of their vehicles and take cover when they heard the noise of the aeroplanes approaching. The Japanese while retreating had set fire to Pegu and the ammunition dump there. While Netaji's convoy was approaching Pegu, an intense battle was raging between the INA battalion commanded by Major L.S Mishra, hero of the Arakan victory, and the British Indian army. Mishra and his men held the enemy steadfastly until Netaji's convoy was safely out of Pegu and sacrificed their lives in their endeavour. Writes S.A. Ayer, "We were literally living every moment of our lives in those hours." Several times death had missed them by the whiskers.

From Pegu the party moved towards Waw, further East. Netaji was saved miraculously from the machine gun fires and the bombers more than once. While crossing the river, the vehicles got caught in the mud and Netaji's car was sinking in a deep pond. Netaji had extricated himself to safety, his car was pulled out and the journey resumed. The pace was slow as the road was choked with the Japanese lorries. The convoy tried to take a short cut to the Waw river and lost each other in the process. All the men and the lorries had to cross the river by ferries by night to avoid the bombers. Netaji did not want the Ranis to wait and asked Major Swami and Col. Shaukat Malik to arrange for the girls to cross the river on foot. Netaji and his men kept waiting patiently for the ferry. When the ferry was not available and the night was almost over he insisted that his men should cross over and he himself was the last man to do so. Netaji was so oblivious of the threats to his own life that he ensured a safe shelter for the girls and his men and slept out in the open, despite the heavy bombing and machine gun fires around him.

During that twenty one day trek, they walked through all the nights as the trucks got stuck in the mud, often stayed in dilapidated houses where they could cook some meals, and took cover during the day to escape the continuous machine gun bullets wheezing past them. Moment the convoy had left Rangoon, Netaji's only concern was to ensure safety of the Rani of Jhansi girls, among them was feisty Janaki Davar, whose diaries also provide valuable information about the journey. Davar notes that Netaji never rested, he looked into the minutest details of the planning and arrangements himself,

issued instructions and ensured that all his men and the Ranis were safe. Davar remembers for instance how she observed Netaji limping, and when he was forced to open his boots by the girls, they were horrified to see his feet all swollen and painful from blisters, yet not a single moment he had rested or complained of any pain. Netaji carried his own pack, like his girls, who carried their own heavy packs and rifles as well. Ayer says, "I saw Netaji in his unique greatness, combining the highest qualities of soldier, statesman, leader, man and greatest of all, humanitarian, in those unforgettable three weeks of peril in the jungles on the Burma-Thai border. He never, even for a moment, cared for his own life. All the time he thought only of the safety and minimum necessary comfort of the men who were marching with him. He attended to every little detail about the lorries and cars in the convoy, about the ration of rice and dal available at each halt, about the drinking water from the nearest well or pond, in fact every little detail that mattered. " They crossed the Sittang river safely as the thousands of Japanese crowding for the ferry had given priority to them, possibly as they had Major General Isoda of Hikari Kikan with them. On the other bank INA men were waiting to take them to a nearby shelter. Bhaskaran, Netaji's confidential steno from his Singapore days, was there too. They dreaded both the day time and moon lit nights because of the advantage both offered to the enemy bombers. There were mistakes too. A Japanese civilian diplomatic officer, who was a true friend of the Indian independence and an ardent admirer of Netaji, was bayoneted by mistake by the INA soldiers and Netaji was very upset about it. The Anti Aircraft battery station in which Netaji and his men were resting, was targeted by heavy machine gun fire. Netaji had yet another miraculous escape, but Nazir Ahmed, ADC to Maj. General Chatterjee, was injured in the thigh. Despite all attempts to take utmost care of him, he died in Moulmein hospital ten days later. As almost all cars were on the other bank of Sittang river, Netaji and his team decided on a forced march to Moulmein, en route to Bangkok. Major General Zaman Kiani was in charge of the party. Kiani later recollected that after giving him the charge, Netaji became a willing follower of his commands, thus confirming Swami Vivekananda's quote, "He who knows how to obey knows how to command."

The Forced March and Ordeal of 21 days

It is to be noted that Netaji had the option of taking a plane ride to Bangkok as he had a private aeroplane at his disposal. But instead he chose to undergo a forced march with his troop and colleagues, and shared their pains and ordeals, completely oblivious of his own suffering. Netaji and his party were joined en route by Japanese General Isoda and Ambassador Hachiya, followed by about forty Ranis and about hundred soldiers. Every half an hour there were air raid alarms and the troop dispersed quickly

and retook their positions immediately after, in a disciplined way. They took shelter in a jungle, with Major General Bhonsle joining them with the remaining Ranis.

Reminisces Ayer, "The Head of the State, Premier and Foreign Minister of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, on the historic retreat from Rangoon to Bangkok, sat under a tree on a blanket that was spread on the ground full of dust and dead leaves." He continued, "All these days he showed a wonderful poise and equanimity of mind and rarely lost his temper. He was completely unruffled and quite cool even in the face of the most provocative foolishness on the part of someone or the other." The Ranis had helped the men in cooking and serving. They had carried a heavy luggage themselves on their back and walked, shoulder to shoulder, with their male comrades, like true revolutionaries. Few lorries were available for transporting them from Kyauktaw village and Ayer, Chatterjee and few others hopped on but Netaji did not. Says Hugh Toye about Bose's decision to travel with his men, 'Do you think,' he burst out at the Japanese walking with him, 'that I am Ba Maw of Burma that I will leave my men and run for safety?'

On the moonlit night again enemy bombers flew past them but could not see them. A Company of soldiers led by Major Surajmal, the hero from the Modawk battle, also arrived. The lorries had missed their appointed rendezvous points and Netaji lost his temper as he was extremely concerned about the welfare of the men. On the way, the Burmese National Army guerrillas, had fired on a troop of Japanese soldiers, but they did not touch Netaji's team. The party safely reached Moulmein on the eastern bank of the Salween river. Crossing the river was a dangerous experience for Ayer and the Ranis. Chatterjee and Kiani had arrived in Moulmein a day earlier to make arrangements. They had encountered massive bombing and machine gun attacks but had escaped injuries. Netaji arrived by crossing the Moulmein river during daytime despite heavy enemy aeroplanes sorties and bombing, on May 3. During the course of their stay in Moulmein, Netaji gathered all the party members and gave a morale boosting speech, asking them to think about the future tasks that lay ahead in Bangkok. Chatterjee proceeded to Siam by train with a contingent of the RJR girls. Netaji was to come by car. The local Indian population had requested him to leave some Azad Hind army behind for protection and he made arrangements for the same. The Ranis and the accompanied men were packed in the trains like sardines. The trains moved by the night and during the daytime remained in the sidings in the jungles. Also in between they had to walk ten to fifteen miles at a stretch as the bridges were destroyed. Major General Bhonsle had accompanied about thirty people, including Ayer, in another train.

Netaji reached Bangkok a day ahead of his men, on May 15. He got himself a cup of tea and immediately got onto work, instructing the League members to meet his men who were struggling to find their ways to reach Bangkok. Pandit Raghunath Shastry, Shewakram Mehtani and other prominent businessmen and League members had willingly given up their own cottages for the stay of Netaji and his men. There they were joined by approximately six hundred men from X Regiment, led by Col. Thakur Singh, who were force marched from Pyinmana to Moulmein and then traveled by the railroads.

In Bangkok - Responding to the changed circumstances

The theater of the world was changing rapidly. Germany had surrendered to the allied forces on May 7. Mussolini was executed on April 28 and Hitler committed suicide on 30th April, with Goebbels following him. Japan had not given up. It had continued to fight despite the debacles and defeat in Philippines, in Leyte, in Burma, in Iwo Jima, and in attacks in the mainland Japan, including Tokyo. Japan still hoped to enter an agreement with Russia and continue to fight and help liberate the Asian nations. Thailand was still an ally. Netaji established the Head Quarters of the Provisional government and the Azad Hind Fauj and Indian Independence League in Bangkope, near Bangkok. Cabinet was established and major decisions were undertaken regarding the battle readiness. Cabinet decided that in the event Japan surrendered, Netaji was to ask Japan to establish contacts with Russia and in the event of Thailand falling, would be flying out to a safer country for continuing with the struggle. Funds had to be raised for continuing the operations. Ishar Singh was entrusted to negotiate with the Thai authorities on a loan. Ayer and Chatterjee went to Saigon to raise funds on 6th June. Finance Minister Raghavan was summoned from Singapore with all assets. Anand Mohan Sahay was despatched to Hanoi.

On 21st May Netaji gave a speech in Bangkok. "The conflict between the Russians and the West, he said, had already begun at San Francisco: That time is not far off when our enemies will realize that though they have succeeded in overthrowing Germany they have indirectly helped to bring into the arena of European politics another power — Soviet Russia — that may prove to be a greater menace to British and American Imperialism than Germany was. The Provisional Government of Free India will continue to follow international developments with the closest interest, and endeavour to take the fullest advantage of them. The fundamental principle of our foreign policy has been and will be — Britain's enemy is India's friend". As a geopolitical expert, Bose could envision the role of Russia and the fall of Britain and France from being world powers to becoming subservient to the cause of America. He knew that soon Russia would

become a world power and would have conflicts of interest with Britain and America. He perhaps even thought of establishing a provisional Government in Russia or Manchuria and continue with his fight in the event Japan surrendered. He had also hoped that the British Indian soldiers who had come in close contact with the INA members would be indirectly influenced by them and could, in effect, be inspired to declare a mutiny. He told the Indians in South East Asia, "We may not travel to Delhi via Imphal, but we shall get there all right. The British were no longer of any account without American support, the tide of opinion was turning in India itself, even in the Indian Army at heart large sections sympathize with the I.N.A. Far more would do so when, in Burma, they came to realize that the Provisional Government and Indian National Army were not puppet organizations as they had been told, when they heard the national greeting 'Jai Hind' freely used, and the National Anthem freely sung." He expressed hope that the defeat in Burma would prove to be a blessing in disguise.

Situation in India - Failure of the Simla Conference

Meanwhile in India Archibald Wavell, the Viceroy, had invited the leaders to a conference in Simla to discuss the new arrangements that could be granted in view of the allied victory in the war. Gandhiji was released from prison in 1944 on account of ill health. In Britain the Labour Party won the general election. Writes Dr. R.C Majumdar, "It did not take Britain long to realize that she had after all won a Pyrrhic victory. She saved herself and her empire by inflicting a crushing defeat upon Germany and Japan, but this fight to a finish exhausted her manpower and economic resource to such an extent that she could never hope to recover her old power and prestige." The Labour Government was headed by Clement Attlee, and Pethick Lawrence was the Secretary of State for India. Labour had indicated that they would rethink Britain's policy towards India and would grant her self Government. Writes Leonard Mosley, "After Singapore, Burma and the sinking of her finest ships by the Japanese, Britain would never again be able to demonstrate in Asia the background of strength and influence—the machtpolitic—which had for so long enabled her to rule a million people." Wavell's Simla conference was bound to fail as both Muslim League under Jinnah and Congress, were at loggerheads with each other. Wavell proposed to reconstitute the Viceroy's Executive Council so that all the members except the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief would be Indian politicians.

Subhas Bose speaks out strongly against Wavell's plan

Subhas Bose was certain of the British insincerity as they had not freed up the political prisoners. He was worried that Congress under Gandhi would accept the compromise formula as the Congressmen had done before. He made a series of broadcasts in June 1945 from Singapore to reject any overtures on the part of Britain to come to a negotiated settlement. However, his propaganda secretary and journalist M. Sivaram, who was responsible for the newspaper Azad Hind and acted as his spokesperson, resigned over what he perceived as Netaji's attempts to denounce Gandhi over the meetings with Jinnah to arrive at a compromise. Subhas knew better than Sivaram. Any compromise would have meant partition sacrificing and endangering lives and properties of millions. How prophetic he was would be proved a year down the line.

On 18th June Subhas broadcasted the following message with stark warning to his countrymen - "Only motive of the British Government is to mobilize India's support in the war against Japan. British people are war weary." He continued, "They want others to fight their battle while they themselves reap the fruit of the victory." He further said, "it is vital for the British to make the Indian people pour out their money and shed their blood for the preservation of the British Empire." He considered Wavell's plan as Sir Stafford Cripps's "old offer in a slightly altered garb." He reminded Indian leaders that, "Any acceptance of Lord Wavell's offer will be tantamount to a voluntary shedding of the precious Indian blood and draining our resources in fighting Britain's imperialistic war. But what would India gain in return? Nothing except a few jobs in the Viceroy's executive council." He wanted to make the point clear that, "British are cunning politicians and they have chosen the proper psychological moment for aiming this offer at India. British politicians are hoping that the Indian people are now overawed by the recent Anglo American victories. The Indian people may, therefore feel that, we stand no chance of achieving independence during the course of the present war and might as well make the best of a bad bargain and take whatever is being offered by the British." He also thought that the British Government's attitude of treating Congress as one among the parties exposed their sinister motives. He also pointed out that the Viceroy did not intend to set free those who were interned in 1939 and 1942. He reminded that a constitutional change in a democratic country is heralded by an amnesty to all political prisoners. He pointed out that the "British plea is completely hollow and is intended to delay and deny the Indian demand. If the British really want to set up a responsible Government, they would lose no time in declaring India a self-Governing nation and handing over power to the people's representatives." He elaborated that the best way for achieving liberation of India was to carry out armed struggle from outside India "to the last man and to the last round", take helps from international friends to advocate for India's cause in the international forum and, lastly the countrymen must be prepared to

"launch a revolution at the opportune moment which will spread like the wild fire of the prairies and may even be supported by the British Indian forces." He concluded by saying that "there is no earthly power that can stop the Indian people from achieving their goal of freedom."

He again broadcasted on 19th June and reminded the leaders that the outcome of accepting Wavell's offer would be that "Congress leaders will have to take the responsibility of sending at least half a million Indian troops to fight Britain's imperial war in the regions beyond Burma and in the Pacific." He told them that the British Government was on the verge of bankruptcy, that Britain's industries which were drawn into war production had lost their pre war markets and those markets were now in the hands of America. He opined that it was impossible for Britain to start peacetime activities and fight another war with Japan in the Pacific. He implied that Britain was trying to use Indian soldiers as proxy in their final war to reoccupy the erstwhile colonies in Asia and Pacific. He reminded the Congress leaders that they were still pledged to the Quit India or the Do or Die slogans adopted three years ago. "No Congressman can, consistently with his principles, therefore look at Lord Wavell's offer." He thought that the Congressmen were looking at Lord Wavell's offer despite all these, because a "wave of defeatism has swept over India since the Anglo American successes." He narrated the international geopolitical situation and said that "some of these developments will not be favourable to our enemies, and they will afford India further opportunities for achieving her independence." He cited the examples of Syria and Lebanon, who despite the allied victories, "were utilizing the international situation for their independence." He opined that the British politicians wanted to make India domestic issue of the British empire and therefore planned to deny her the international spotlight that she deserved for her legitimate demands. He made an appeal to Mahatma Gandhi, to the president and the members of the Congress working Committee and the members of the Congress, to not to misjudge the international situation and thereby take wrong steps in the domestic politics. He pleaded again and again not to compromise India's interests by giving up the demand of independence. He said that India's star was definitely on the ascendant. He told them, "We have suffered long and have suffered much. Let us suffer a little more a little longer. But by all means let us stick to our guns still the end of the war." He also reminded them that Lord Wavell's gesture had to do with the domestic politics of Britain where a regime change was in the cards. He therefore begged off the Indian leaders not to commit before July 5, the day of conclusion of the general elections in England which might see a majority for the Labour Party. To set the tone of the future India along the secular lines he reminded Hindu Mahasabha and the other political parties that "Our objection should not be to

Muslims getting a majority of seats on the Executive Council. The most important question is what type of Muslims come into the executive Council. If we have the type of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Asaf Ali, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the destiny of India will be safe." He said, "There is no difference between a patriotic Muslim and a patriotic Hindu." He correctly interpreted that the British intention was to give all the Muslim seats to the nominees of the Muslim League. He surmised that the Muslim League would cooperate with the Viceroy in fulfilling his war obligations for exploiting Indian manpower and resources for fighting the imperialistic war. In conclusion he thanked the Hindu Mahasabha for their outspoken opposition to the Lord Wavell's plan. He said in conclusion that it would be the duty of every right thinking and patriotic Indian to start "a raging and tearing campaign all over the country against Lord Wavell's offer."

On 20th June he again spoke on the same subject. He asked those who were willing to consider the proposition of Lord Wavell, "What has happened to our goal of independence to which there is not even a partial reference in Lord Wavell's offer? Does Purna Swaraj mean only Indianization of the Viceroy's council, or does it mean complete independence and total severance of the British connection? Why did the congress ministries resign in 1939? What has happened to our slogan of Do or Die? Why did we reject Congressmen like Sri Aney and Dr. Khare for accepting jobs on the Viceroy's executive Council (in the past)?" He again spoke over radio on 26th June, that some of the political leaders in the country were furious with him (Netaji) for pointing out the obvious flaws of Wavell's plan and opposing their compromise with the British Government, and also pointing out that the Congress Working Committee did not represent the opinions of the countrymen. He said that the Imperialist leaders were abusing him for taking the help of Japanese. He pointed out that his cooperation with Japan was on the basis that Japan recognized India's complete independence and that she had formally recognized the Provisional Government of free India. He now told them how Indian National Army was the armed forces of free India, that had its own arms and equipment, own Indian officers, carried Indian National flag, trained by Indian instructors and fought under its own Indian commanders, in contrast with the Imperial Indian army that was governed by the British and fought under British officers for the sake of Britain's interests. He reminded them that not a single Indian had been promoted to the rank of a General and only a minuscule section of the 2.5 million strong Indian contingent were selected as worthy recipients of the highest honour, the Victoria Cross, thereby exposing the blatant discrimination in its ranks. He reminded the political leaders that even Britain took the help of America to fight the war, that if Japan happened to surrender, Azad Hind Government would take the help of other world powers to achieve

their goal and therefore it was no puppet of Japan as was widely believed by these leaders.

The End Game of INA - Surrender of Japan

Netaji left Bangkok in the second week of June to inspect the works of the third division in Malaya whose commander was Col. G.R Nagar. In Saigon, Major General A.C Chatterjee and S.A. Ayer reorganized the IIL, established branches and increased staff. Ayer, as the propaganda minister also strengthened the work from the radio station at Saigon. Pamphlets were written addressing Indian community in Indo China. Chatterjee also carried out discussions with the Japanese for the possibilities of taking the help of the Chinese and the Russians. He sent his report to Netaji on the discussions which were not very encouraging. Japanese representatives from Tokyo and Southern Region Army HQ met with Netaji to discuss further plans of action with him in Singapore. In the week of July 4 to July 11, Netaji week was celebrated across South East Asia. All Indian houses were supposed to fly the Tri Colour atop their houses. Lectures, patriotic film shows and sports meeting with the school children in Hanoi, were held. With the support of the Annamite people a procession was organized carrying Netaji's photo, with active participation from the prominent members of the Indian community. There were also some unfortunate incidents. A British spy, Ghulam Ahmed joined the finance Department as an accountant. He accompanied A.M Sahay to Hanoi along with another spy called Tora Khan. A great man had said years later (extracted from book Oi Mahamanab Ase), "Indian Independence League became meddled with British spies and traitors. Chandramall and his friends Golam Ahmed and Taru Khan, all of British intelligence service, all joined IIL, Tokyo. Golam Ahmed and Taru Khan were employed in the Finance Dept. Gen. Chatterjee (Finance Minister) was fooled by Anand Mohan Sahay, Secretary of the Azad Hind Government. Golam Ahmed and Taru Khan were friends of A.M Sahay."

In Singapore, Netaji laid the foundation stone of a war memorial to the martyrs of the Azad Hind Fauj on 8th July. The monument was completed by August. After reoccupying Singapore, British forces destroyed the memorial with dynamite and forbade anybody to lay any wreath on the rubble, in a defiance of the international convention of not destroying monuments in honour of martyrdom. Locals, mostly Indian communities continued to defy that order and placed their homage on a regular basis. They were intimidated and were even arrested by the British from doing so but despite the stern measures, they could not be stopped.

At the end of July Netaji traveled to Seremban and Kua Lumpur, apparently in a bid to save a lady Chinese spy who had laid trap on a senior INA officer, from the wrath of the Japanese. On August 6 and August 9, American fighter bombers dropped the Atom Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, obliterating the two cities and their residents and putting millions at risk from health and radiation hazards. Japan, which could not be made to surrender through a conventional war, was brought to its knees by the brute force. An investment made in the Manhattan project to the tunes of billions of dollars had to be justified to the American tax payers and Harry Truman ensured that the justification was achieved on the Asiatic "Japs" rather than on the fellow Caucasians in Europe. I.J Kiani called up Netaji in Kuala Lumpur to inform him that Soviet Union had declared war on Japan. He got the news of Japan's intention to surrender from senior IIL leaders. Chatterjee had started for Singapore with the finances that he had secured in Saigon. But his plane did not reach Singapore and the Japanese could not offer him an alternate transport. By the time Chatterjee had reached Singapore from Kuala Lumpur with the help of Kiani and others, Netaji had left for an unknown destination. In Singapore, Chatterjee handed over the money to M.Z Kiani and a committee for the relief of the Indian community, and set out for Saigon where he hoped to find Netaji.

According to S.A. Ayer's "Unto Him a Witness", Major General Kiani had called Netaji to be back in Singapore as soon as possible, avoiding night journeys to evade the Chinese guerrillas. Netaji did not think that Russia attacking Japan had affected the plan of Azad Hind. He attained to some urgent matters in Seramban regarding a serious breach of conduct and addressed about two thousand men in the Azad Hind Training Camp in Seremban. Lakshmayya and Ganapathy, Secretaries of the Publicity department of Indian Independence League HQ in Singapore, had come all the way from Singapore to Seremban by car and met Netaji at 2.00 AM in the morning. They brought the news that Japan had surrendered. Netaji took it calmly. He was very clear that Japan's surrender was not Azad Hind's surrender. Netaji wanted Raghavan and Swami from Penang to come down and meet him as soon as possible in Singapore. He also asked for John Thivy. S.A. Ayer who received these instructions duly communicated to I.J Kiani to send a car to Penang, stop en route at Ipoh for Thivy and drive back to Singapore. Netaji had not slept all through the night. He was a very hard worker and usually slept very little and still woke up very early to perform his regular japam. Despite having no or little sleep he was fresh and ready for a twelve hour long car journey to Singapore. Captain Shamshere Singh, Netaji's ADC, was with him. Major General Allagappan, Col. Nagar and Col. I. J. Kiani were there in another car following Netaji's.

Travel Plan for an Unknown Destination

On reaching Singapore at 7.30 PM an urgent conference followed and Major Gen. Kiani and Habibur Rahman were called. The conference continued till 3 AM in the morning post dinner. S.A Ayer states, "There was complete agreement on all the steps to be taken as a consequence of Japan's collapse—the instructions to be issued to Divisional Commanders on the military side and to the Chairmen of the branches and sub-branches of the IIL throughout East Asia except Burma where the British troops were already in occupation, the distribution of sufficient money to the troops as well as the civilian officials to last them for at least six months." It is to be noted that Japan officially surrendered on August 15, 1945.

Netaji and his team had a hectic three days, conferencing and listening to news items until 14th August. Urgent and important instructions had to be sent to all the IIL branch offices and INA units across SE Asia and also to Bangkok and Tokyo. Netaji had chalked out every possible detail, instructions to be issued, manner of surrender, what should be done with the Rani of Jhansi camps which had about five hundred girls in Singapore, and how the civilian organizations should look after its workers after British landed in Singapore. Of all the problems, Netaji accorded priority to two, the fate of the Rani of Jhansi girls and that of his forty five Tokyo cadets. Netaji was also in touch with Capt. Janaki Davar to ensure the rehabilitation of the RJR girls to their homes with sufficient money and other necessities to help them tide over the days of anguish to follow. Writes Ayer, "After receiving the news of Japan's surrender Bose he was all energy and good cheer, "cracking jokes" with his staff, up to all hours, busy all the time." In fact, whosoever had met Netaji, admitted that Netaji was a very warm and friendly person. That was one of the reasons why he had an intrinsic appeal. Even his enemies grudgingly admitted his quality of being kind and warm-hearted to all and sundry.

On August 14, Netaji had one of his teeth pulled out and despite the obvious discomfort he went out to watch a drama put together by the Ranis on the life of their symbol, Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, written by Lt. P.N Oak of the INA., ADC to Maj. Gen. J.K Bhonsle. When the performance was ended three thousand members of the audience sang Subh Sukh Chain. A.N Sarkar had arrived from Bangkok by plane and joined the conference. Before Sarkar had come it was decided that Netaji would be staying back in Singapore with all the ministers and face the British when they landed on the island. Netaji's fate in the hands of the British was also frankly discussed. They had decided that if Netaji were taken prisoner and sentenced to death by the British, India would instantly erupt

and British rule would come to an end. If Netaji were released, he would continue fighting for Indian independence. Consensus among the members of the cabinet was that Netaji should not be taken prisoner. Netaji opposed this idea and said that he wanted to remain with his ministers and his army in Singapore and share their fate. After listening to Sarkar, Netaji had some inclination to reconsider his decision. Decisions had been taken on all matters except for the one concerning Netaji's fate.

Netaji sent for Col. Stracey in the morning of 15th August. Col. Stracey had come with the designs of the war memorial for the Azad Hind soldiers. It was a dogged determination to set up a memorial right in the place where enemy would probably land, of soldiers who had so heroically fought against them for more than a year. Netaji foresaw what was going to happen. In the words of Ayer, "Netaji examined model after model and turned to Stracey and said: " Colonel Stracey, I want this memorial to rise on the sea face of Singapore before the British forces make a landing here. Do you think you will be able to do it?" Stracey rose to the occasion. He replied: " Certainly, Sir." It was a very difficult task as nobody knew when the British would be landing. Once they landed there could not be any further work. Still Stracey had committed and he was determined to achieve. "Stracey had worked night and day and completed the work on the memorial in less than three weeks", continued Ayer. ***As soon as British landed, the civilized British, the Imperial British, the race of the gentlemen and aristocrats, destroyed the memorial - an act that was nothing short of vandalism and hooliganism.*** The Forgotten Army mentions further, "Stracey had designed it (the memorial) himself: a rectangular shaft perhaps eight feet across and some twenty-five feet high, bearing in large block letters the words Ittefaq, Itmad, and Kurbani—unity, faith, sacrifice. He had hired a contractor and was supervising the work. Just when it was finished is not clear. What is certain is that when the unbelievable news of Netaji's death reached Singapore, a service was held at this memorial. A photograph shows it banked with flowers, Zaman Kiani and Stracey stiffly at attention in the foreground. Then on the 5th of September the first British troops landed. The memorial was instantly noticed. On the 8th September sappers appeared, placed charges, and blew it to bits." It was Mountbatten's order. Providence, the silent witness, smiled a wry smile. ***Exactly 34 years later, Mountbatten's body was blown off in a similar fashion by a bomb in his boat, planted by the I.R.A.*** It is worthwhile to mention here that de Valera, the Irish president, was a great friend and admirer of Subhas Chandra Bose.

On the night of the 15th August, the cabinet finally persuaded Netaji to get out of Singapore. the question was where he would be going. He himself dubbed it as an adventure into the unknown. Netaji decided that Maj. Gen. Kiani would be assuming

the full charge of the affairs of INA in Singapore on behalf of Netaji and Maj. Gen Allagappan and A.N Sarkar should also stay behind in Singapore. Netaji also took with him Col. Habibur Rahman, Col. Pritam Singh, Major Abid Hasan and Debnath Das from Bangkok. Major Swami was also expected to join him. Ayer was also supposed to accompany him. At 9.30 AM Netaji left Singapore by a bomber and Kiani and other officials came to bid him adieu. The flight reached Bangkok by 3 PM. Nobody knew about his arrival and they had to wait until Maj. Gen Bhonsle turned up with a transport. The news spread of his arrival and until 17th morning he had a steady but unending stream of visitors, officials of INA and IIL, Indian community members, who wanted to know about Netaji's plans. The departing party included along with Netaji, Col. Habibur Rahman, Col. Pritam Singh, Col. Gulzara Singh, Major Abid Hasan, Debnath Das and S.A. Ayer. The farewell was affectionate and tearful as Netaji embraced each one of the members present - Paramanand, Ishar Singh, Bhaskaran, Pandit Raghunath Shastry, Captain Rizvi and others. From Bangkok the flight started on 17th morning at 8 AM and landed in Saigon at 10 AM. There were two planes, one carrying Netaji, Ayer, Habibur Rahman, Pritam Singh, and the Japanese liaison officer and in the other General Isoda, chief of Hikari Kikan, Mr. Hachiyya, Gulzara Singh, Abid Hasan and Debnath Das. There was a solitary Indian in the distance, it was Chandra Mall, secretary of the transport department of IIL in Saigon. According to the words of a great man as stated earlier, he was a British intelligence spy planted by a prominent IIL member.

Preparations for the Journey

Netaji and the Japanese officials had a hurried consultation and it was decided that General Isoda and the Japanese would fly to Dalat, the HQ of Field Marshall Count Terauchi, and would ask for transportation for Netaji and his party. Netaji stayed for the night in Saigon in the house of Narain Das, secretary of the housing department in the IIL Saigon. Netaji had barely 30 min of rest when Liaison Officer Kiano told him that a plane was ready to leave and had only one seat. Netaji did not want to leave until he knew the destination of the plane. So Kiano had to go back and the top Japanese officials, including General Isoda, Mr. Hachiyya and Field Marshall Terauchi came to meet Netaji. There was a conference in one of the rooms in which Habibur Rahman was asked to join. Ayer and others from INA or IIL were not allowed or not present. Ayer in his *Unto Him a Witness* writes, "When the talks were still going on behind closed doors in that room, Netaji came out with Habib, leaving the Japanese behind in the room. Netaji motioned Habib, Abid, Debnath and me into his room and asked us to close the door and bolt it- Gulzara Singh and; Pritam Singh who had moved to the next house were immediately called. I have rarely seen Netaji so impatient. In five seconds

he wanted to know whether Gulzara Singh and Pritam Singh had been sent for and why they had not yet come. He said: " Tell them not to bother about their dress, but to come at once. I have no time to lose. We have to take important decisions and that without a moment's delay- Come along, hurry up." Actually they took only a few minutes to come, but it looked like ages. The door was closed and bolted from inside. Netaji stood in the middle and we stood around him. He looked at each one of us and said: " Look here, there is a plane ready to take off in the next few minutes and we have got to decide something important right now. The Japanese say there is only one seat to spare, and what we have got to decide now, in a few seconds, is whether I should go even if I have to go alone, I have tried my best to get at least one more seat but there is very little hope. Shall we take that one seat and shall I go alone? " His men, not willing to let him go alone, pleaded him to request the Japanese for one more seat. According to Ayer nobody knew where the plane was bound for but he could guess that it was for Manchuria. Netaji and Habib went back to the room and after a hectic discussion Netaji came back and told his men that Japanese had agreed for one more seat and he wanted Habib to accompany him. In any case Netaji asked Ayer and Gulzara Singh to pack and come along in case they get more seats. Netaji, Habib and Ayer were in a car to aerodrome while Debnath Das, Gulzara Singh, Pritam Singh and Abid Hasan were in the second car. The second car got delayed and the Japanese were impatient to leave. Lt. Gen Shidei was also going to accompany them. Tsunamasa Shidei incidentally was the Vice chief of Staff of the Kwantung army based in Manchuria. Netaji had decided to wait as there were important pieces of luggage in the second car. Netaji bade farewell to his men with a poignant Jai Hind and stepped onto the Sally bomber. At 5.15 PM on 17th August the plane took off from Saigon aerodrome. That was the last time Netaji was seen by his men.

The rest is either history or a concocted story.

The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal

Impact of INA on India's Freedom

Death or Disappearance

What happened on 18th August is vividly described in Wikipedia article on Subhas Bose and therefore need not be elaborated on the website. Prof. Sugato Bose deals with the subject matter in great details in His Majesty's Opponent. The story is largely based on the testimony of those who claim to be the eye witnesses, including Col. Habibur Rahman, Netaji's adjutant, and the other Japanese army men who survived the so called crash.

Ayer was packed on a bomber to Tokyo and was given the news on 20th August by Rear Admiral Chuda, no. 2 in Japanese Navy in the Burmese waters, on the day he was waiting for his plane in the Saigon aerodrome. Debnath Das, Col. Gulzara Singh, Col. Pritam Singh and Abid Hasan were to be flown to Hanoi in another plane. Major General Chatterjee was brought to Saigon and then he was also transported to Hanoi to be with his colleagues. On 23rd August Sahay informed them that Radio Tokyo had broadcasted the news that Netaji was dead. As per the official version, the bomber carrying Netaji, Habibur Rahman, Shidei and other Japanese army men, had stopped for the night in Tourane in French Indo China. It resumed its flight the next day and arrived in Taihoku (Formosa or Taiwan). On August 18, at around 2.30 PM it took off after re-fueling and suddenly it lost height and crashed. General Shidei died on the spot along with the pilot and few others. Among 14 men there were seven survivors to tell the tale. Netaji and Habib managed to come out of the plane but Netaji's clothes were on fire and his face and body parts were badly burned. He was taken to the Japanese military hospital in Taihoku and was still conscious but in great pain. His last words to Habibur Rahman was, "I feel that I shall die very soon. I have fought for India's freedom until the last. Tell my country- men India will be free before long. Long live Free India." He passed away between 8 and 9 PM.

Habibur Rahman sought to embalm the body and get it transported to Singapore but the provisions for embalming were not available and the coffin size was too large to be put in a bomber. Habibur Rahman did not allow to take photograph of the dead body as the face was badly distorted. The body was taken to the Taihoku crematorium and was consigned to the flames with only Habibur and few other Japanese petty officers as witnesses on August 20. It was not immediately known what happened to Shidei's body. The ashes were later brought to Tokyo by Habibur Rahman and funeral rites were observed in the Renkoji temple on September 14. Japan broadcasted the news of death from Radio Tokyo on 23rd August, 5 days after the actual incident. The world,

particularly India and the SE Asia, was stunned. Many disbelieved the death story, among them were his close followers, elder brother Sarat Bose and even Mahatma Gandhi.

Incidentally when S.A. Ayer decided to go to Taihoku after 19th Aug upon hearing of the plane crash of Netaji he was accommodated in a bomber that was supposed to go to Taihoku, but instead of Taihoku the Japanese bomber took him to Taichu and despite his repeated protests they could not send him to Taihoku, citing poor weather conditions as the reason. **So effectively none but Habibur Rahman remained the sole witness and what passed between Japanese leaders and Netaji in that closed room conference in Saigon with Habibur Rahman being the only participant, still remains a closely guarded secret.**

Writes Hugh Toye, "But It is humanly certain that he died on August 18th, 1945, in the Nammon Ward of the Japanese Military Hospital at Taihoku. Had he survived and reached Dairen, he would have tried to place himself and as many of his faithful friends as possible under Russian protection." Question is, did he even intend to do that? Nobody can answer and therefore this matter is best explored in the light of the evidences and the counter evidences, testimonies and the gaps in them, facts and arguments. Hugh Toye's argument is clearly wrong – **any attempt to bring his colleagues would have made known to the world that he was not dead, there were infiltrators in IIL, Japan would be in a very embarrassing position and so would be Russia. Bose would never have risked it. Instead, he would have focused on building it up all over again.** One night in April 1945 – Major Swami and Ayer was called to his room, and he said to them, "Italy gone, then Germany, then Japan. Which other world power shall we turn to next? What about turning to Russia? " Was he really joking or had he already made up his mind about seeking help from Russia in the event that Japan surrendered? It is now quite evident that Netaji's planned end destination was Dairen in Manchuria and not Tokyo. The key question would be, had he really set up and staged a disappearance to continue with the struggle for freedom, or did he accidentally die in an air crash?

Impact on South East Asia

The Japanese surrender came as a surprise to the allied forces as the long haul of reoccupying the erstwhile colonies had to be done quickly and decisively. But the task was made onerous by the fact that in many of these places Nationalistic movements had taken their birth and they were no longer willing to have a foreign power on their

soil. From Malaya to Sumatra to Java to Indo Chin, it was the same story repeated. In 1940, The Vichy regime in France had decided to give access to Tonkin to the Japanese following the Japanese occupation of French Indo China. By 1945 Japanese had a complete control of Indo China. Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were proclaimed as independent states, members of Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (source: Wikipedia). After the surrender of Japan, the French tried to reassert their authority but came into direct conflict with the Viet Minh.

On 2 September 1945 President Ho Chi Minh declared independence for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. French control was reestablished by the European allied forces. By 1950 French suffered its first defeat and by 1954 Viet Minh won its decisive victory. Cambodia also became free under Sihanouk in 1953. Between 1945 and 1960, three dozen new states in Asia and Africa achieved autonomy or outright independence from their European colonial rulers. Local nationalists who had been fighting the Japanese occupation started fighting the colonial rulers once Japan surrendered. In Indonesia for instance Japan had defeated Netherlands in 1942. After Japan's surrender on August 17, 1945, Indonesia declared its independence under its leaders Sukarno and Hatta, with Japanese support. Indonesia became completely free from Dutch influence by 1949. Thus although Japan was vanquished, its battles and conquests paved the way for the liberation of Asian countries through a newfound assertion of Nationalistic identities against the colonial masters. It is also believed that a retreating Japan helped the rebels of the colonies with arms and ammunition for them to wage war against the European powers.

Netaji's Azad Hind Fauj was thus a forerunner for all the Nationalistic movements against the colonial powers in Asia. In Burma where Aung San had sided with the British to drive out Japan, a military administration was established. After the war ended, the British Governor, Colonel Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, returned. A rift had developed between the Communists and Aung San, and they had opposed the Government. Dorman-Smith was replaced by Major-General Sir Hubert Rance as the new Governor, and almost immediately after his appointment, the Rangoon Police went on strike. The strike, starting in September 1946, then spread from the police to the government employees and came close to becoming a general strike (Wikipedia). A new executive council was formed with participation from Aung San and negotiations for Burmese independence was carried out. Aung San had an agreement with Attlee in January 1947, that led to dissatisfaction among some of the key stakeholders in Burma. Aung San also succeeded in concluding an agreement with ethnic minorities for a unified Burma on 12 February, celebrated since as 'Union Day'. In July 1947, Aung

San was assassinated. On 4 January 1948. Burma chose to become a fully independent republic, and not a British dominion upon independence. This was in contrast to the independence of India. In Malaya, after Japanese retreat and surrender, a Federation of Malaya was created under British protection, but because of a Communist insurrection that lasted until the 1950s, independence of Malaya became an established fact. A general election was held in 1955 and Malaya became independent in 1957. Hence the Japanese surrender in its wake had ensured that the Nationalists take control in almost all the South East Asian Nations, driving out the colonial powers, in many cases through armed revolution and insurgency, a la Indian National Army of Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the most popular Asian leaders.

The Capture and the Trial of INA men - Treatment of INA prisoners of war

After the failure of the Simla Conference, British Government wanted to make it clear that they were committed to the realization of their promise of self governance to India. Accordingly on 21st August they had declared the elections for the various legislative councils to be held in the winter. Wavell was intent on making his Executive Council after the main elections. The moribund state of Indian politics was rejuvenated once more with the arrival of the news of death of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the imprisonment and the impending trial of the INA men, esp. their top brass - G.S Dhillon, Prem Kumar Sahgal and Shah Nawaz Khan.

Prior to the issue of INA emerging, Congress was in a rather sorry state. Six years of complete inaction had taken its toll on the party and its leadership. In the words of Dr. R.C Majumdar, "The impending elections served, in a sense, to clear the political sky in India. The Muslims outside the Muslim League could clearly feel which way the wind was blowing and flocked to the standard of the League. The number of Nationalist Muslims who still adhered to the Congress was almost negligible. Thus, on the eve of the election, the two rival Parties—the Congress and the Muslim League—stood face to face, representing, broadly speaking, the Hindu and Muslim elements of the population in India. Both the Parties made elaborate preparations for contesting the election. The Muslim League fought on the single issue of Pakistan. The Congress announced that it would contest the elections on the issue of the immediate transfer of power." Dr. R.C Majumdar made a pointed reference of how the INA trials helped to shape up Congress to get back to the mainstream. He writes in the History of Freedom Movement in India, "The Congress had grave difficulties in fighting the elections. It had been in wilderness for more than three years, its organizations had broken down as many leaders and members were still in prison, and its party funds had been

sequestered by the Government. But, as on more than one occasion in the past, the blunders committed by the Government came to its rescue just at the psychological moment when its fortunes were at a very low ebb. It was the trial of the Indian soldiers who had joined the Indian National Army (I.N.A.) organized by Subhas Bose in Singapore. About twenty-five thousand Indian soldiers —prisoners of war in the hands of the Japanese, who had joined the I.N.A., were rounded up after the collapse of the Japanese army in Burma. The military authorities, on the basis of evidence in their possession, brought charges against some of the Officers not only of waging war against the King but also of committing gross brutality on the members of the I.N.A. accused of desertion. A Military Tribunal was constituted by an Ordinance and the first batch of three accused officers—a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Sikh—were put on public trial in the historic Red Fort at Delhi.

The then Advocate General of India, N.P Engineer, brought serious allegations against the INA like using force on the prisoners of the war to join the Azad Hind Fauj, killing unwilling soldiers who refused to join INA, torture and other means to get the British Indian soldiers on the side of the INA and also sending the enemies to the concentration camps. *Prima facie* they all seem to be false allegations and without rational. Nobody can be forced to join an army like INA that survives on the basis of commitment to the cause. Bhulabhai Desai, who had cross examined the witnesses, proved that there were many inconsistencies in their statements, and therefore their statements were unreliable. Several witnesses of the Government like Dilasha Ram or Shahidullah Khan actually gave statements in favour of the defendants and thus made the case against the accused Shah Nawaz, Dhillon and Sahgal, untenable. In the course of the trial it was clearly mentioned that since INA had been the armed military wing of a Government that was accepted and accredited internationally, the soldiers of the Azad Hind Fauj would be entitled to be given the status of Belligerent as per international law. Therefore they should not be tried in a British court. The defendants denied all the charges against them and said that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had made it clear that only those who were ready to face extreme hardship and even death, were eligible to join the Azad Hind Fauj. So there was no question of any coercion or threat to induct soldiers in the INA. The cases that were highlighted by the British Government, of killing of the antagonists, were pointed out to be false. The charges of sending enemy soldiers to the concentration camps was also false as the Government could not even prove the existence of any such camp run by the INA or the Azad Hind Government. Dhillon for instance highlighted that several of his soldiers from his regiment, when they were told about the likely hardships, decided to leave the regiment and were all sent back to Rangoon.

The British and the allied forces had a nick name for the INA soldiers. They were called JIFC (Japanese Indian Fifth Column) or in short, JIFFs. Writes Peter Fay, "What the (British) Indian Army saw in the rest, the ex-Indian Army men, was a distorted mirror image of itself, men turned by some dreadful combination of circumstance, temptation, and duress into dupes, renegades, utterly faithless men. They could not simply be held until the war was over, then sent back to their families in India. Nor could they all, the many thousands of them, be quietly hanged or shot. A mix of reincorporation, rehabilitation, and punishment was required. To make this operative, some way had to be found of winnowing out the recoverable, then arranging the rest in groups ranked according to the severity of the proposed punishment simple men who, overwhelmed by defeat and the abrupt withdrawal of their British officers, had lost their bearings and behaved like sheep. They were to be denominated "whites," sent back to their regimental depots, and readmitted into the ranks. Then there would be those who, while entitled to a measure of sympathy and understanding because of the pressure put upon them and the indoctrination they had undergone, nevertheless showed by their manner that they had bent to the one and listened to the other. These were "greys," bound for special "reconditioning" camps before being allowed, perhaps, to rejoin. Finally, there were those who exhibited by word, deed, or rank a fundamental disloyalty, compounded perhaps by criminal behavior. Let them be called "blacks." Blacks were not to be returned to their regiments. They were security risks, just as Japanese soldier prisoners were—but doubly so, since the war's end would not make them "safe" and therefore eligible for repatriation. For them there would remain the question of court-martial and appropriate sentencing. It was the Forward Interrogation Unit that determined whether a man was white, grey, or black. (If black, he was sent at once, if feasible, to CSDIC at Delhi, where he was questioned again with an eye to his probable trial.) He continues, "By early July of 1945, half a dozen shiploads (of INA men) had already gone. When Japan surrendered, the Government of India had no option but to bring home the rest. So as the rains petered out and the cool weather approached, large bodies of Jiffs reached Chittagong and Calcutta by sea and were carried thence to places all over north India. To Jhikargacha (Jassore) of course, and Nilganj (which is also near Calcutta). To Khadki outside Poona, and Bahadurgarh close to Delhi. To Attock on the Indus two hundred miles northwest of Lahore, Multan on the Chenab two hundred miles southwest, Delhi itself (men likely to be tried or whose testimony might be needed were collected at the Red Fort), and other places, some named in the newspapers and some not. The camp at Bahadurgarh received the blacks from Bose's German-sponsored Indian Legion."

Ayer had noted in *Unto Him a Witness* that when he was put up in a "cage" in the Red Fort, he asked for and got several newspapers and it suddenly seemed to him that the exploits of INA and the Netaji were everywhere and everybody was paying a glowing tribute to the role INA had played in trying to liberate India. Congress party was quick to grab the offer as the God sent opportunity that enabled it to pull itself out of the "ditch into which the Quit India crackdown had flung it" (as per Peter Fay). On the last day of the AICC session Nehru moved a resolution for the instant release of the INA soldiers held in captivity. It would be tragic, the resolution ran, if these men were to be punished for having laboured, "**however mistakenly**", for the freedom of India. According to the reminiscences of Dilip Kumar Roy who was a great admirer of Pandit Nehru, **Subhas made a remark about Nehru that he would always try to play to the gallery. He would always go with the tide and therefore he could be popular with everyone, but that would also mean a compromise of principles and ideals at every step.** Nehru also announced for the setting up of an INA Defence Committee by the Congress. In order to gather funds for the rehabilitation of the INA men as well as to meet the administration expenses of fighting their court cases, an INA Funds Committee, later known as the Relief committee, was established which raised funds from the public. Generous contributions poured in from across India. In Calcutta the movie houses donated one day box office receipts. In Cuttack a benefit football match was played until the district magistrate banned it. In Bombay the local funds committee chaired by the Mayor himself, raised Rs. 15,000 in three weeks. In Lucknow Nehru auctioned oil paintings and raised Rs 1200 in one afternoon. Writes Dr. R. C Majumdar, "The Indian public did not, so long, know anything of the I.N.A., but now came to regard them as a band of patriotic heroes fighting for the liberation. of their motherland, and a wave of sympathy for them swept the whole of India." Congress Defence Committee included several legal luminaries including Nehru himself, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Asaf Ali and Kailas Nath Katju, apart from Bhulabhai Desai.

Gandhiji had written to the Viceroy a note saying that although he did not support taking resort to arms even in self-defense, he would nevertheless request the Viceroy to not to ignore what Indians were thinking as he was not blind to the courage and patriotism of the persons. He however would end with a pathetic request, "Let His Excellency decide what is best in the circumstances." The Viceroy himself had developed doubts. He wrote to Pethick Lawrence, "**This is the first occasion on which an anti-British politician (read Subhas Chandra Bose) has acquired a hold over a substantial number of men in the Indian Army, and the consequences are quite incalculable.**" Even British officers had warned, "Bose, had filled his men with an ineradicable

sense of mission. Defeated, dispersed, captured, they nevertheless remained so bitten by the independence bug as to be beyond rehabilitation."

Apart from Congress's defence committee, Achhru Ram, father of Prem Sahgal and a judge of Lahore High Court, decided to fight for all the three prisoners. But the star of the show from Defence was Bhulabhai Desai. Sapru had only made a guest appearance. Bhulabhai was a well known member of the Congress and one of the architects of the notorious Tripuri Congress where Subhas was deliberately trampled by the Gandhivadis that included Desai, Acharya Kripalani, Vallabh Bhai Patel, Rajagopalachari, Govind Ballav Panth and others. Bhulabhai was one of those who not only voted, but also actively campaigned against Subhas. Bhulabhai was now almost seventy years old, and his health was poor. Moreover, he had fallen out of favour of the Congress Working Committee for his meetings with Jinnah against the wishes of the Congress. He probably had also developed a tinge of repentance and as he came to know more and more about the deeds of Subhas and INA, the Nationalist in him strongly overcame any inhibition that he might have had.

The trial was scheduled to open on October 8, but defence sought more time to gather witnesses. One Captain Harichand had informed the British Government that Congress really had no interest for the INA. They had just wanted to take advantage of the impending elections, by looking at the public sentiment that strongly favoured a release of the INA men. This was revealed to Harichand by none other than Asaf Ali himself (Ladlimohan Roy Choudhury - "Azad Hind Fauj er Court Martial o Gana Bikkhobh"). It was also revealed by the British intelligence that Congress was planning to organize a large-scale movement capitalizing on the Nation's mood on the Azad Hind Trials, if its demands were not fulfilled. Since the prisoners under trial involved a Muslim and a Sikh, the Muslim League of Jinnah and the Akali Dal had come forward to support the prisoners and even Hindu Mahasabha had come out openly in support for the release. The C in C Claude Auchinleck had thought that the trial was absolutely necessary to ensure that the Indian Army would see and treat them as traitors. The British Government had left no stones unturned to suppress any news about the INA's march and victories on the Indian soil, so Indian public knew next to nothing about them, not until the trial publicized their activities and that of their Netaji. The Indian Army had also had ample opportunities to mingle with the INA forces and had seen them from close quarters, in their encounters in Burma and Malaya. They had met the local Indians and seen the patriotic fervour and heard from them the exploits of the Azad Hind. However when the newspapers in India began to report about the activities of the INA in the context of the trials, it created waves of anger and resulted in an upsurge in public

emotion in favour of the INA and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. SA Ayer, upon his arrival in Delhi from Tokyo to testify at the trials, realized with thrill that the "INA had literally burst upon the country... from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin was aflame with an enthusiastic fervour unprecedented in its history." Dr. Majumdar writes, "The fame of Subhas Bose's I.N.A. and the fact that the Congress had taken up the cause of the accused excited great interest in the trial throughout India. The official evidence, given in course of the trial, brought home to the Indians, for the first time, the magnitude of the I.N.A. organization set up by Subhas Bose and the heroic feats performed by I.N.A. men. Popular enthusiasm now rose to the highest pitch. When the Muslim League associated itself with the defence of the accused, the agitation became all-India in character. There was great resentment at the persecution of the 'patriots' and wild popular demonstrations were held over a wide area, from Calcutta to Lahore and Bombay, and from Lucknow to Madurai, occasionally accompanied by popular outburst of violence and the firing of the police." Punjab had seen massive demonstrations and strikes on the first two days of the trial, with thousands of students demonstrating in Lahore, Lyallpur and Rawalpindi, and "INA days" were observed in Karachi, Madras, Vellore, Salem and other parts of India. In Madurai, two people were killed in police firing, and in Calcutta there was a riot with the police resulting in the death of several persons. There were open hostilities against the Europeans, even to the extent of denying them services and goods by Indian shops. Sir Norman Smith, Director of the Intelligence Bureau, in a confidential note to the Home Department, said, "There has seldom been a matter which has attracted so much public interest and it is safe to say, sympathy."

The trial lasted for 8 weeks. The main arguments put forth by the Government were that the Azad Hind Fauj in general and the prisoners under trial in particular, were guilty on three counts - They were 1) guilty of high treason, of desertion from Indian Army to help a foreign army, the Japanese, to act as collaborators and traitors 2) they had instigated and in several cases had murdered themselves those who had refused to comply with their plan, i.e. they had tortured or killed British Indian Army soldiers who had refused to join them 3) They had perpetrated heinous crimes against their own men, by executing them on charges of treachery and disobedience. In the Court Martial there were seven members, including Major General A.B Blaxland. There were four British and three Indian Army members. Judge Advocate was Col. F.C.A Kerin. Waiting members included two British and two Indian Army members. Military Prosecutor P. Walsh was appointed to help the Advocate General N.P Engineer. The Government witnesses include Lt. D.C Nag, who held important positions in the Azad Hind Government. The Defence had planned for around 112 witnesses but did not need

them as the Government witnesses had provided many crucial evidences in favour of the defence. Several Japanese officials were called to offer their testimony, who included Hachiya, Katakura and Matsumoto. Former Azad Hind Government representatives like S.A Ayer, Lt. Col A.D Loganadhan, Dinanath of Azad Hind Bank etc. had been called to testify. Apart from Dhillon, Sahgal and Shah Nawaz, charge sheet was filed against three more INA soldiers - Captain Abdul Rashid, Subedar Shingara Singh and Fateh Khan. Soon they were joined by Burhanuddin. Writes Peter Fay, "The reconquest of Burma had been the Indian Army's greatest triumph. That it should encounter there a force composed of men who had once belonged to it, constituted perhaps its greatest disgrace. The disgrace could be expunged, and the honor of the Indian Army made whole again, only by bringing to justice some, at least, of the leaders of this traitor force. A process for doing this had been set in motion. Buffeted from the outside by a rising public outcry that Congress Party orchestrated, half paralyzed on the inside by muddle, weariness, and the necessity of arranging in haste what would normally be done with magisterial deliberateness, the process faltered."

In the trial of the top three, the defendants as well as the Japanese witnesses testified how they had responded to Netaji and in glowing terms depicted the courage, the patriotism, and the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Shah Nawaz for instance proved false the allegation against him that he ordered the execution of one Mohammad Hussein for treachery, proving in the court that Hussein was convicted but was not shot as his sentence was commuted. The Government had revealed how Burhanuddin, one INA officer, had flogged to death one of the soldiers Joga Singh for a petty transgression. But it was proved to be an exception attributed to a particular person. Shah Nawaz also revealed how British Army had forced them to surrender in Singapore by giving them up to the Japanese, how they had fought on equal terms in Burma and in Imphal despite severe shortages, how the INA had to endure many hardships that they had willingly borne for a cause, that of India's freedom, and how they had been motivated to that cause by their Supreme Commander and leader, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Prem Sahgal and Dhillon in their defence stated very clearly their motivation and proved that the allegations against them were baseless. Finally Bhulabhai rose to argue the case. In a ten hour long summation, disregarding his own failing health, Bhulabhai argued that it was "not a case of three individuals waging war against the King, but the right of the Indian National Army — the organised army of a duly-constituted Provisional Government of India — to wage war for India's liberation." Bhulabhai reminded the British of the fight of the Maquis, the French revolutionaries, against German occupation. While the secret rebel army laid down its life to protect its

motherland, The French emperor was a willing collaborator of the Germans. Did by rebelling against the ruling emperor the Maquis become traitors? And yet, the same Maquis were supported by the Britain. He reminded the court that when Garibaldi battled against the Italian monarch, England had given him Nationalist status. He reminded the British that Col. Hunt had handed over forty five thousand Indian prisoners of war in the Farrer Park in Singapore, without any consideration of what was going to happen to them. So the British Emperor himself did not do his duty to his men. Therefore the question of treason did not arise. A revolutionary war, waged for the liberation of a people, if properly declared and conducted, gave those waging such a war the rights of belligerents, as Britain had in the past conferred to the Bolivarian rebels in South America, of the Confederate Army in the US Civil War, or of the Dutch, Polish and Yugoslav governments-in-exile during World War II (even while they had no territory to call their own and Azad Hind Provisional Government had legitimate territories and it was recognized by no less than nine countries of the world).

It is difficult to say what the British Government aimed to achieve through an open trial. Auchinleck had written to the India Office in mid-October, "that when the evidence comes to be made public, as it will be made public because the trials are going to be open to the public, some of those gentlemen out there who have been so loud in their sympathy for the I.N.A. may sing a different tune. I think it will be difficult for them to defend murderers and torturers of people of their own race simply because they remained loyal to their salt." Writes Peter Fay, "There were two arrows in Sir Naushirwan's quiver, the treason charge, and the charge of murder and/or abetting of murder. But as the tales were told, it became more and more apparent that they had nothing to do with Sahgal, Dhillon, and Shah Nawaz. In his closing address Engineer admitted as much. Kerin made it explicit. "There is not and never has been," he advised the court, which as required listened to him before it retired to reach a verdict, "the least suggestion that these three accused before you were ever personally engaged in the ill-treatment of prisoners, or even that they were at any time present when men were tortured or ill-treated." In this respect Ayer's testimony was most useful as he narrated all the voluntary activities done by the Azad Hind Government's people, without any threat or coercion, like raising money, recruiting and training people, sending tonnes of rice for Bengal famine and so on. Even the witnesses of the prosecution had nothing to say against the three accused officers. One of them, Dilasa Khan, remembered Shah Nawaz saying that if they noticed any Japanese soldier mistreating any Indian woman, that soldier had to be stopped and if needed shot, because the fight was for the freedom of India and not for the well being of the Japanese. A report on Nov 17 by the Governor of Punjab, Bertrand Glancy declared that in the eyes of the Punjabis, who comprised of

the most of the men in the Indian Army, Sahgal, Dhillon and Shah Nawaz were heroes. The report said that the public did not take the charges against them of murder and abetment of murder, seriously. Calling them traitors simply fed their popularity. The report stated that if a sentence of death was pronounced and was actually carried out, the British Government in Punjab would face agitation worse than that preceded the Amritsar (Jallianwala Bagh) massacre of 1919, violence more serious than any seen during the Quit Indian Movement of 1942. The forcible suppression if any would prejudice for years any hopes of a constitutional settlement in India. Sir George Cunningham, Governor of the North-West Frontier Province, suggested something that Glancy had stopped short of. Auchinleck, he wrote, ought to announce that "as Indian opinion is opposed to the trial of these persons (Sahgal, Dhillon, and Shah Nawaz), he wipes the whole thing out and takes no further proceedings against anyone." Announce it now, he urged the C.-in-C. Halt the first trial and cancel any that are scheduled to follow."

The court pronounced its verdict. The accused were guilty of waging war against the King Emperor, but not of murder or of abetting murders or tortures. The sentence on all three was cashiering (dismissal from the service), forfeiture of pay and allowances, and transportation for life. Later the C in C Auchinleck remitted the transportation of life sentence and made them free. On the next day in Delhi a huge rally was organized in the honour of the INA heroes by the Congress in which Asaf Ali presided. More than hundred thousand people gathered in the rally. When the three officers came out of their train in the Lahore station on 5th January, 1946, they received a triumphant welcome from a huge crowd, despite section 144 imposed. The police did nothing to stop the crowd, India had progressed far from the days of the Jallianwala Bagh. The table had turned. Slaves were no longer slaves. Peter Fay rightly observed in the Forgotten Army that the **victorious armies are granted ceremonial triumphs, defeated armies were not. The INA of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had snatched victory from the jaws of defeat and had almost united and liberated India, exactly as he had predicted and promised to them two and half years back.** The second and third trials and all subsequent trials were moved to the Delhi Cantonment. Burhanuddin was found guilty and sent to seven years of rigorous imprisonment. Similarly Shingara Singh's and Fateh Khan's trials were delayed and their sentences were set aside after independence. One case of interest was that of Abdul Rashid. Rashid had sought help only from Muslim League and he claimed that he had joined because "he could see that Mohan Singh and his Sikh and Hindu friends intended to ride into India on the backs of the Japanese and, once there, make it a place where no decent Muslim could hold up his head. He had joined, as other Muslims he

assured the court, had joined, so that they could arm themselves against this conspiracy." Rashid's sentence brought the Muslim students together on the streets along with the Hindus, but with a difference. The Muslim students wanted to chant Pakistan Zindabad, instead of the customary Jai Hind (Peter Fay). It just showed how powerful the Muslim League had become and how it had indoctrinated and poisoned the youth. The supposed communal harmony that the INA trials had created broke to pieces soon. Writes Peter Fay as an astute observer, "For three years the Congress was proscribed and almost dormant. The Muslim League was not. Its membership swelled. Its organization hardened. It announced that it alone spoke for Muslims, and torpedoed Wavell's Simla Conference by insisting that all five Muslim seats on the Viceroy's Council be filled by League men. It entered the Central and Provincial elections of late 1945 and early 1946 determined to make the point again, this time at the polls, and took every Muslim seat in the Central Legislative Assembly and nine out of every ten seats reserved for Muslims in the Provincial Legislative Assemblies. Though Congress Muslims survived (Asaf Ali entered the Central Assembly with a handy win in his Delhi open constituency), it was clear, now, that in most provinces they would continue to do so only if Hindus voted for them." In Bombay the police prevented a procession in support of the INA not to proceed through the Muslim quarters. In Jhansi, a Bose birthday procession passing through a Muslim quarter was attacked. Hooligans attacked Shah Nawaz with slogans like Pakistan Zindabad. Thus the vision of a united India that Netaji had hoped for, came to an end quickly and abruptly owing to the sinister designs of the Muslim League and the duplicity of Congress.

On 12 April, 1942, in a Delhi press conference Nehru declared that if Subhas proceeded with his force he would be resisting Subhas because he believed Subhas's army to be dummy force under Japanese control. Gandhi said that "in fact I believe that Subhas Bose will have to be resisted by us." Communists and the M.N Roy's party had directly opposed Subhas. So none of them were in fact a willing friend of the INA and Subhas. Dr. Majumdar is extremely blunt in asserting that, "There are some grounds to believe that the Government decision to put the I. N. A. men on trial met with gratified approval, even from the Congress leaders." There were suspicions in some quarters that the Congress deliberately used the I.N.A. as an election stunt. Dr. Majumdar argues that, whether this is true or not, there is not the least doubt that the Congress swept the polls at the crest of the wave of enthusiasm created by the I. N. A. trial. Last words were spoken by Nehru and Patel. The same Nehru who had vowed to fight Subhas's army had they brought the Japanese to India, had stood up for its defence, and remained in its support only until the elections. In a meeting in Calcutta for the INA week celebration Patel rose and explained to the crowd

that the men and women of the Indian National Army deserved to be recognized for their courage and self-sacrifice, but not because they had taken up arms and fought for India's freedom. Their greatest accomplishment, he said, had been the suppression of communal divisions. Because of this the Congress welcomed them and had a place for them. But there was a condition to meet. If they wished to enter the Congress fold they would have to adhere to the Congress creed—"and put their swords back into the scabbard", **in short, erase the memory and legacy of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.** Some INA men including Shah Nawaz Khan did just that for a deputy ministership, others like Dr. Pabitramohan Roy chose not to respond and remained an outcast. Still others, like M.Z Kiani and Habibur Rahman, migrated to Pakistan as they got no place or respect in independent India from the new Government.

The Possibility of a Mutiny, Worst Fears of Britain

As popular resentment against the INA trials grew and the mutiny infected the Navy, the British confidence was shaken. They were no longer certain about the loyalties of the Indian soldiers. It was no longer possible to hold on to the power in India without increasing the number of troops, administrators and other expenses, which the almost bankrupt Britain living on a beggar's bowl could ill afford. Congress, meanwhile, after winning the general elections on the INA wave, had shown a volt face. Nehru had accompanied Mountbatten to Singapore where he, despite an initial confirmation, never turned up to put a wreath on the destroyed INA memorial, leaving the Indians there seething. On the issue of the reinstating the INA soldiers to the Indian Army, he wrote a letter to the Commander in Chief General Auchinleck on 4 May, 1946 - "I believe everyone who has thought seriously about the INA knows that it is dangerous and risky to undermine the discipline of an Army. It would damage the fine instrument that the Indian Army is." - a hollow statement. To the general public however, Bose stood as a colossal figure whose loss was sorely felt amidst the lack of leadership and the ensuing chaos. The British intelligence reports had admitted that **Bose enjoyed a greater support among the Muslims than Mr. Jinnah, at least definitely in the Eastern Bengal.** There were confessions of Muslim League leaders like Suhrawardy and later Mujibar Rahman, to that effect. According to Rudolf Hartog, who had seen the Indian Legion and its Muslim soldiers from a close quarter, the "Muslim league, under the leadership of Jinnah, was no legitimate representative of the Indian Muslims, but rather a reactionary clique with selfish plutocratic interests. **Their propagated division of India, was a hidden British maneuver to divide India as they had once divided Ireland.**

Auchinleck's concerns about the Indian Army getting impacted by the INA trials was not unfounded. British Intelligence reports pointed to the same possibility. The so called JIFFs (and HIFFs) often came from the same villages as that of the loyal British soldiers and were close relatives to many of them. When the JIFFs would tell the villagers the story of a freedom army, that had fought for what even villagers of India had begun to aspire after, they would most certainly influence the so called loyal army men. Home Secretary on the subject of detention camps had said that longer the INA men were kept together, the worse they became. In Burma senior officers begged New Delhi to ship the last Jiffs home before the blacks finished infecting the whites (Peter Fay).

Wavell had sent a report to the prime minister narrating the possibility of an armed struggle by Congress with the help of the INA men. His note read, "the rising would come in the spring, or "quite possibly earlier." It would mean an organized assault upon the fabric of government, attacks on railroads, telegraph offices, police stations, public buildings generally. Government servants would be hunted down and killed. It would be 1942 all over again, though on a much larger scale. And its object would be "the expulsion of the British." Auchinleck also wanted the British Government to declare their plan for India. "In the absence of a firm declaration," Auchinleck added, "the loyalty of the Indian Forces is likely progressively to deteriorate. . . ." If the rot went far enough and an insurrection occurred, it would be up to British battalions to suppress it. But there were very few British battalions in India. The task would be beyond them. They would not even be able to protect the lines of communication over which reinforcements from abroad would have to move."

Attlee wrote Pethick Lawrence that everything depended upon the reliability and the spirit of the Indian Army. He wrote, "Provided that they do their duty, armed insurrection in India would not be an insoluble problem. If, however, the Indian Army were to go the other way, the picture would be very different. It is therefore clear that all possible steps should be taken to foster the loyalty of the Indian Forces, to show them that they have the solid backing of His Majesty's Government (source: The Forgotten Army). In his conclusion Peter Fay says in his 'The Forgotten Army', "In the autumn of 1945 India was swept by a storm of excitement and indignation, a storm that Bose and his renegades ignited. It was a storm the Indian officer, and the jawan too, could not ignore. They did not ignore it. We have it on the authority of the Commander-in-Chief that they did not ignore it. In 1942, at the time of Quit India, there had been no question of their reliability. Now their own commander doubted it. Three years of campaigning, three years climaxed by battlefield victories in Europe and on the Irrawaddy, do not explain the change. Only that autumn storm can. It was the Indian National Army that forced

Britain's hand. Not by struggle would India become free, Mason was saying. Not by struggle did she, the twelve volumes of India: The Transfer of Power announce. The instruments of governance were not won, they were delivered, in the manner of the father handing the car keys to his son. Among those instruments, perhaps chief among them, was the Indian Army. It was to be passed on as it stood, regimental flags, battle honors, the full range of practice and tradition, untouched and inviolate. It was because Bose and his Jiffs had by their very presence threatened to bring the structure down, that it had been thought necessary (Bose being dead) to put Jiffs on trial."

Peter Fay rues the fact that though there are many roads, statues and avenues in the name of Subhas Chandra Bose and a museum dedicated to him in Calcutta (Netaji Bhavan), he could not find a single road, statue of any officer or a museum dedicated to the Azad Hind or INA. Since then at least Delhi has an Azad Hind Marg and an INA museum has been set up in the Red Fort. The Netaji related papers that have been classified are in the National archives and are available through netajipapers.gov.in.

Clement Attlee's claim - the real cause of India's independence

Justice Phani Bhushan Chakrabarty, who hosted Clement Attlee when the former Prime Minister of Britain had visited India in 1956, in the Governor's house, made a sensational claim. In a letter to the publisher of the noted historian Dr. R.C Majumdar's book, History of Bengal, he stated that, "When I was the acting Governor, Lord Attlee who had given us independence by withdrawing British rule from India, spent two days in the Governor's palace in Calcutta. At that time I had a prolonged discussion with him regarding the real factors that had led the British to quit India. My direct question to Attlee was that, since Gandhi's Quit India movement had tapered off quite sometime ago and in 1947 no such new compelling situation had arisen, that would necessitate a hasty British departure, why did they have to leave? In his reply Attlee cited several reasons, the principal among them being the erosion of loyalty to the British crown among the Indian army and the Navy personnel as a result of the military activities of Netaji. Towards the end of our discussion I asked Attlee, what was the extent of Gandhi's influence upon the British decision to quit India. Hearing this question Attlee's lips became twisted in a sarcastic smile as he slowly chewed out the word, m-i-n-i-m-a-l." (Source: Bose: an Indian Samurai, by Maj. Gen. G.D Bakshi)

Murder of INA prisoners - the Nilganj massacre

It is also alleged that the British Government had killed a large no. of INA soldiers in the Jhikargacha and the Nilganj camps. There are collective memories from the local population who had been witnesses to large scale firings during the midnight. According to the eyewitness testimony a large no. of INA soldiers who were identified as "blacks" by the British Government were killed on the night of 25th September 1946, and their bodies were burnt. Machine gun fires were heard throughout the night and in the morning villagers and local residents could see piles of burnt and unburnt bodies. Many bodies were dumped in the local river whose water turned red. While commenting on this incident, Amrita Bazar Patrika reported that Nehru had said that there was a firing in Nilganj camp and only 5 people had died. Till date no serious research has been done on this subject by the eminent historians.

An account of the slaughter is given here -

<https://www.myindiamyglory.com/2019/10/08/1945-nilganj-massacre-how-british-shot-2000-ina-soldiers-in-det-camps/>

Writes Kanailal Basu in his book Netaji Rediscovered, "File relating to the Jhikargacha camp, available in the National Archives, contains documents showing a report sent by the Eastern Command to the General HQ, informing them about the killing of INA prisoners. There were about 1580 prisoners in Jhikargacha camp." None of them were released. So it is presumed that all were killed in one night's covert operation that left no witness alive.

The Mutinies in the Army, Navy and Airforce - India gets her Independence

The airmen of the Royal Indian Airforce had gone for a strike by the end of January, 1946 to protest against alleged discrimination against the officers. American journalists reported the desertion of Indian Army troops in Indonesia when they were asked to shoot the nationalists. But the most serious threat came from a mutiny on the Navy. On 18 February, the ratings of the Signal School in Bombay went on a hunger-strike in protest against what their Central Strike Committee described as 'untold hardships regarding pay and food and the most outrageous racial discrimination,' and in particular against their Commander's derogatory references to their national character. They were joined later by ratings from the other naval establishment. Naval rating MS Khan and fellow Naval rating Madan Singh had begun the revolt on HMS Talwar in Bombay. In Karachi port ratings began a revolt on HMIS Hindustan. By 19 February 1946, ratings from Castle and Fort Barracks had joined the revolt. Soon the revolt spread to Kochi, Vizag and Kolkata ports. One of the participants was B.C Dutta, a five year veteran in

Navy, who was an ardent nationalist who, along with his colleagues took the name of Azad Hindi, in obvious reference to the INA as inspiration. The insulting taunts of the commanding officer King, disrespect and discrimination, disparities in salary between Indians and Europeans and poor quality of food were contributing factors, but the mutineers had already been caught by the Nationalist bug. What started as acts of vandalism soon turned into strikes. Mutineers took hold of all the ammunition and trained their guns on the major landmarks. About 78 ships were occupied by the mutineers including HMIS Bahadur, Chamak and the Himalayas.

A central Naval Strike Committee was established and a charter of demands was prepared. About 20,000 ratings joined the strike. Union Jack was pulled down from all ships and Tri Colour was hoisted atop. Strikers had asked for Aruna Asaf Ali to be part of the negotiation. More and more rating from the signal communications joined the strike. Members of the Royal Indian Airforce joined the strike on 21st February. The ratings had pledged to remain non violent based on assurance from the Congress leaders. Muslim League had also advised the Muslim members to resolve amicably the differences in the negotiation table. Gandhiji, Patel, Nehru, all the top Congress leaders had refrained from supporting the ratings, although the ratings had appealed to them.

Lockhart, leader of the Southern command, had promised to break the mutiny. He deployed British Indian Army to chase the mutineers to their barracks from the streets. But large scale violence started with an assault on the ratings. Because of Congress's indifference Communists soon tried to hijack the movement. Congress, who knew that a transfer of power was in anvil, could ill afford a militant army or a navy, so their leader's assurance of support was a mere lip service. The mutiny was remarkable for the Hindu Muslim unity and solidarity in the face of severe communal tensions fostered by League. Naturally League was apprehensive. The unrest spread to the lands as mill workers, students, railway workers all joined the strikes. Army took to violently curb the protests and the British authorities including Godfrey, the officer commanding RIN, threatened to exterminate the ratings as police forces refused to take part. Sardar Patel who had urged for restraint, did not provide any help. Artillery guns were trained against the ratings in HMIS Hindustan. There were many casualties among Indian sailors. British destroyers positioned themselves along Gateway of India. By 22nd February, having no national leaders supporting their cause, and being betrayed by the violent actions of the Army, the ratings had surrendered. It is significant that the mutineers called themselves as Indian National Navy and used slogans like Jai Hind. The ratings also used the picture of Subhas Chandra Bose. One of their demands was to release the INA prisoners. After the great betrayal of Congress and the League, the ratings were

subjected to court martial and about 476 of them including Dutta, Madan Singh and Khan were dismissed, never to be reinstated in either India or in Pakistan.

Mutiny in the army barracks in Jabalpur took place on 27 February. The people involved were Indian Signal Corps personnel posted in the Signal Training Centre in Jabalpur. The Jabalpur mutiny, in which more than 1700 men were involved, was also put down with an iron hand. This was the first major mutiny in the armed forces after the war and it unnerved the British Government.

Provisional Government of India was formed on 2nd September, 1946 with members from the Viceroy's Executive council, with the council's Vice President Nehru assuming the prime ministership of a largely Congress Government. Patel became the Home Minister. Muslim League later joined the Government with Liaqat Ali as the Finance Minister. Clement Attlee had sent the cabinet mission to negotiate the transfer of power arrangements. Mountbatten assumed power from Wavell to become the Governor General post-independence. Rob Lockhart became the Commander in Chief post-independence, taking over the baton from Claude Auchinleck.

In August 1946, Muslim League declared Direct Action Day and severe violence followed. Many people, mostly Hindus, were killed by the marauding Muslim mobs in the Great Calcutta Killings in August, 1946. Great carnage followed in East Bengal, particularly in Noakhali where Hindus were massacred by a huge gathering of Muslim mobs. Many women were raped, and men were converted or killed. Hindus retaliated in Bihar and United Province. Mountbatten got Cyril Radcliffe to draw the borders across the heart of India, denoting the Hindu and the Muslim majority areas which would be part of India and Pakistan resp. The waves of insanity followed in the wake of the partition and the independence or the transfer of power from the white sahibs to the brown ones who continued the same legacy of divide and rule. India got her independence but not in the way Subhas had hoped for, nor in the peaceful way that Vivekananda had envisioned, nor through only nonviolence as was the desire of Mahatma. Subhas did not fight for a moth eaten India that would be cut into pieces by the crafty politicians in connivance with the British who dealt a parting blow. Particularly the agony of Bengal would have made him very angry and **he would have vowed to re unite India.**

Said Jawaharlal Nehru, "The truth is that we were tired men, and we were getting on in years too. Few of us could stand the prospect of going to prison again - **and if we had stood out for a united India as we wished it, prison obviously awaited us....**The

plan of partition offered a way out and we took it." - A candid admission. Leonard Mosley in his Last Days of the British Raj had said, "But for Nehru and Patel, and all the Congressmen yearning for the fruits of power the carrot Mountbatten dangled in front of their noses was too delectable to be refused. They gobbled it down."

Treatment meted out to the INA and Netaji's legacy in free India

How the Government of free India treated INA - Taken from S.A. Ayer's Indian National Army -

"An I.N.A. rally at Bombay in 1949 urged the Government of India to accept their sacred obligation to the families and dependents of the I.N.A. men who had laid down their lives in the war of liberation, and to the wounded and the disabled; the rally also urged the government to provide an opportunity to all ranks of the I.N.A. to serve free India by reabsorbing them in their proper ranks in the armed forces of India and to pay them their just dues. Two years later, in April 1951, at a joint meeting of the All-India I.N.A. Inquiry and Relief Committee and the I.N.A. Advisory Committee at the Government of India secretariat in New Delhi, under the chairmanship of the prime minister, a memorandum on behalf of the I.N.A. was presented to the prime minister by the I.N.A. representatives. The memorandum referred to the fifteen thousand officers and men of the I.N.A. who had reached India from east Asia by the first quarter of 1946. Their arrears of pay and allowances since the fall of Singapore in February 1942 had been forfeited by the then British government of India. Since then about seven thousand of these officers and men had managed to find some employment or other. The remaining eight thousand officers and men were destitute and in a pitiable plight. If the absorption of the I.N.A. in independent India's army was still considered impracticable, then the memorandum urged that as a symbolic gesture, five thousand jawans might be reinstated, obviating any structural difficulties that might perhaps follow the reinstatement of senior and junior officers. If even this was considered impossible, then the I.N.A. might be employed in the border police, the armed police, the ordinary police, intelligence, the home guards or customs and excise. A melancholy but somewhat amusing sidelight on this conference was the presence of Colonel Gulzara Singh of the I.N.A. who was an ex-minister of the provisional government of Azad Hind, and one of the six trusted associates whom Netaji took with him up to Saigon on his last known flight and "adventure into the unknown". On reaching India, Colonel Gulzara Singh decided that he would only be a soldier in independent India also, and applied for a commission in the army de novo as a lieutenant. He joined as a lieutenant, and as a lieutenant in independent India's army, he attended the conference of the I.N.A. with the prime minister.

In April 1948, the government of independent India declared that no stigma should be attached to the members of the I.N.A.; certain monetary payments including lump-sum grants ranging from Rs 400 to 800 were made. In 1950, *de novo* commissions were provided for the re-employment of I.N.A. officers. Other ranks were permitted to join at the lowest rank. In 1961, the government declared the I.N.A. movement a national movement and its participants at par with other political sufferers.

In 1963, a financial relief of about Rs 30 lakhs was granted. But the most important demand contained in the appeal related to the arrears of pay and allowances forfeited by the British regime to penalize the I.N.A. and deprive the freedom fighters of their hard-earned life-time's savings. The forfeited amount totaled to two crore rupees in 1946, and by 1967, with compound interest, it must have swelled to five crore rupees even by modest reckoning. As against the five crores, the government had disbursed only 68 lakh rupees. At long last, the agitation bore fruit after sixteen years of unrelenting efforts of a handful of I.N.A. officers in Delhi, the moving spirit behind them being Captain L.C. Talwar, the indefatigable general secretary. In a circular dated November 28, 1970, addressed to all L.N.A. personnel, the Azad Hind Fauj Association conveyed the happy news that the Government of India had finally decided to settle the question of arrears of pay and allowances to the satisfaction of the I.N.A."

Patriots like M.Z Kiani, I.J Kiani, Shaukat Malik, Habibur Rahman did not have a place in independent India, they were forced to migrate to Pakistan since no opportunities were provided to them by the Nehru Government (source: Ami Subhas Bolchi, Shailesh De). No INA memorial was ever erected and INA chapter was erased from history text books. Historian Pratul Chandra Gupta was entrusted with writing an authentic history on INA, but his work, though completed, never saw the light of the day. It is alleged that Historian Dr. R.C Majumdar was asked by Nehru to write the history of the freedom movement of India but when he had truthfully depicted the role of INA vis a vis that of Congress's role, he was removed (source: <https://medium.com/dharma-dispatch/how-jawaharlal-nehru-and-his-coterie-ruined-prof-r-c-majumdars-career-eba45077cfe3>).

In 1949 a prohibitory order was issued by the Indian Army to not to use Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's photo in the Army canteens or in any other places in Army barracks, although Jai Hind was adopted as a means of greeting in Indian Army, giving acknowledgement to its growing popularity.

How Netaji and INA had helped in forming the Indian statehood - North East India

There are other accounts as to how Netaji's actions impacted subsequent Indian statehood formation, esp. in the North East. One of the early attempts of Subhas Chandra Bose was to ensure that Muslim League did not succeed in getting Assam out of India. It was Bose's effort that led to the formation of the Nationalistic Government in Assam under Gopinath Bordoloi and thereby Assam and North East could be saved from Pakistan. In 1937 when Muslim League Government had taken over the Assam province, they had a larger design or goal, to annex Assam with the future state of Pakistan that they were demanding. With that goal in sight they had flooded the Assam valleys with Muslim immigrants from the East Bengal, esp. from Mymensingh district. The Assam Congress had given a distress call. Subhas Chandra became president in 1938 and he listened to that SoS. He sent Maulana Azad to assess the situation, but Azad did nothing. Subhas Chandra made a tour of Assam Province, held talks with the warring factions of the Congress and resolved their issues. He ensured the Assam had an Assamese prime minister and nobody else other than Gopinath could hold that post. Subhas won over the tribal and enlisted their help and support for the cause of the Congress. He also got support from Nationalist Muslim leaders like Tayebullah. Muslim League ministry resigned in 1938. The British Governor, with the active connivance of the Muslim League, tried to delay the oath taking ceremony of Gopinath. Subhas accused him of being partisan. The Governor finally relented and Bordoloi government came into existence on 21st September. In later days Bordoloi however had opposed Netaji's collaboration with Japan.

Netaji and INA had close association with the Manipuris and the Nagas during their assault on the British forces. Without active help and support from the Meiteis of Manipur and the tribal Nagas and Kukis of the Naga hills, INA soldiers would have been in greater difficulties.

“Discovery of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: Delhi Chalo Last Camp in Nagaland” is a book written by Er Vekho Swuro of Nagaland. It states how Subhash Chandra Bose intruded into Nagaland particularly in Phek district and met the Naga public and displayed weapons at Ruzazho village. Villagers of the Naga hills had shown their solidarity by giving away their resources in the form of paddy, animals and other items necessary for their survival to INA. The villagers, by their timely intervention and quick thinking, helped the INA men escape from an advancing British army towards their camp at British Bungalow, Chesezu Village.

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Communists and their portrayal of Netaji

The Communists had played a very negative role in the entire saga of INA and Netaji. Not only they had joined hand with the British to vilify Subhas Chandra Bose and jeopardize his endeavours, but also they ensured that all activities of INA on Indian soil were thwarted. They carried out campaigns to paint Subhas Bose as the Quisling of India and even called him as Tojo's lapdog. Even after India got her independence and Netaji's contribution was made known to public, their attitude did not change much. They had given more importance to the fact that Germany waged war against Russia, and this was more important to them than National interests and considerations. This was in stark contrast to the Chinese Communists to whom National considerations mattered. Indian Communists are the real Quislings.

“There is no earthly power that can stop Indian people from achieving their goal of freedom”

Metamorphosis

Disputed Air crash Theory and Afterlife

The term Metamorphosis has been taken from the words of a great man in the book Oi Mahamanab Ase - "I have undergone complete Metamorphosis." The great man calls himself as Dead Ghost or Mrito Bhoot, and Pathik Faqir (Wandering Mendicant).

Transfer of Power Document and Mudie's letter

Several later day researchers have worked on the subject of Netaji's life after the so called death, like Anuj Dhar, whose role in this matter was acknowledged by the Allahabad High Court in its verdict in 2013 (source: Gumnami Baba: A Case History, by Adheer Som). Prof. Samar Guha remains the pioneer in this field for his arduous zeal to prove Netaji's continued existence, over a span of three decades. Prof Samar Guha's Netaji Dead or Alive, has very succinctly and cogently put together facts and evidences against the plane crash theory. Prof. Guha begins with the letter by R.F Mudie, Home Member, Viceroy's Executive Council, to Evan Jenkins, private secretary of Lord Wavell, suggesting various ways to deal with the "problem" of Subhas Bose. The letter was dated 23rd August, 1945, day on which Japan declared to the world that Netaji died in a plane crash. It would appear that the British were still not aware of Bose's death by plane crash. However the last statement in Mudie's letter may raise some eyebrows - "In many ways the easiest course would be to leave him (Bose) where he is and not ask for his release." The question naturally comes up as to release from where? Bose was not interned either in Japan or in Thailand or in Singapore by the Allied forces.

As per the Transfer of Power document, on October 25 the record of the cabinet meeting in presence of Clement Attlee in 10 Downing Street read that the only civilian renegade of importance was Subhas Chandra Bose. Therefore it was clear that the British authorities were doubtful regarding the death of Bose in an air crash at least until October 1945. Even Wavell mentioned in his diary about the air crash incident that "it is just what would be given out if he wanted to go underground." Mountbatten's HQ and MacArthur's HQ conducted separate enquiries in Japan and Formosa resp. British intelligence found four Hikari Kikan telegrams in Bangkok that pointed to Bose's death in the air crash and contained information about his body being flown to Tokyo. The British intelligence thought these telegrams to be cooked up because all other files and records of the Japanese were destroyed, except for the telegrams and their files. There were contradictions in the reports about his dead body being cremated in Formosa and

being flown to Tokyo. British intelligence suspected the motives of General Isoda, chief of Hikari Kikan and Col. Tada of Field Marshall Terauchi's HQ in Saigon as both Isoda and Terauchi had great respect for Bose. They would not have wanted him to fall in the hands of the allied forces. News broadcasted by the Domei agency said that Bose died in Japan and his body was cremated there. The elapsed time of five days between the supposed plane crash and informing it to the public also raised suspicions. After interrogation of the Japanese officials and the INA top leaders, it was evident that Bose's plan was to go to Russia across Manchuria. The presence of Shidei was significant as he was the Army Commander of Japan in Manchuria.

Gandhiji & Nehru's reaction, Shyamlal Jain's testimony before Khosla Commission

Gandhiji stated publicly at the beginning of January 1946 that he believed that Bose was alive and was hiding, ascribing this conviction to his inner voice. A testimony of Shyamlal Jain before Khosla commission revealed that Pandit Nehru received a secret communication from Bose. Jain was a stenographer of Asaf Ali. Nehru had asked Jain to make four copies of the communication which read, "*Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose proceeding by aeroplane from Saigon arrived today, August 23, 1945, at Dairen (Manchuria) at 1.30 PM afternoon. The said plane was a Japanese bomber plane. It was full of gold in the shape of bars, ornaments and jewellery. Netaji carried two attache cases, one in each hand. On alighting from the plane Netaji took tea with bananas. When Netaji finished tea, he along with four others, out of which one was Japanese named General Shidei, took their seats in a jeep standing nearby. The said jeep proceeded towards Russian territory. After about 3 hours, the said jeep returned and informed the pilot of the plane who flew back to Tokyo.*"

Nehru also dictated a letter to Shyamlal which the latter reproduced from memory in Khosla commission-

The letter was directed as Clement Attlee and read, "*I understand from a reliable source that Subhas Chandra Bose, your war criminal, has been allowed to enter Russian territory by Stalin. This is a clear treachery and betrayal of the faith by the Russians. As Russia has been an Ally of the British Americans, it should not have been done. Please take note of it and do what you consider proper and fit.*"

Most of the secret files about Netaji, that were maintained by Pandit Nehru himself, as PM's special file, like correspondences with the INA defence committee, were reported by the Government as either missing or destroyed.

Amritlal Seth, former editor of the Gujarat daily Janmabhumi, who accompanied Nehru during his visit to Singapore, told Sarat Bose, that Nehru was warned by the British

Admiral that Bose did not die in the alleged air crash. About Nehru's failure to place a wreath on the INA memorial in Singapore, Mountbatten revealed in his diary that Nehru acted very compliantly on his advice regarding treatment about INA. Nehru also opposed any judicial enquiry to the death of Subhas Chandra Bose and only opened a line of enquiry with Shah Nawaz at the helm (whom he promised a deputy ministership) when there was a strong possibility of forming a non-official enquiry under Dr. Radha Binod Pal.

In his confidential note Ayer had reported to Nehru that General Tada told him that at the end of the war when Japan had surrendered, Terauchi took all the responsibility to help Netaji. He had arranged for Netaji to fly in the same plane as Shidei to Dairen. Shidei would help Netaji unto Dairen and then Subhas Chandra Bose would fall back on his own resources to contact Russians. Japanese would announce to the world that Bose had disappeared from Dairen.

Story of Taihoku Air Crash - Many Inconsistencies

A Taiwanese witness Y.R Tseng who appeared before the Khosla Commission told that a plane had crashed in September or October 1944 in the same place and not in 1945. Harin Shah, a Bombay based journalist had traveled to Formosa in 1946 to collect evidences pertaining to Netaji's death and wrote a book "Gallant end of Netaji" which he submitted to Shah Nawaz committee. In his book he had mentioned about a Taiwanese nurse who had treated Netaji in the military hospital. But the fact finding team of Samar Guha and Sunil Krishna Gupta could not find any nurse of that name or description in Formosa. Harin Shah had quoted many other Taiwanese in his books, who, later categorically denied any such statement ever made by them as was mentioned in his book, as per Prof. Guha. The three photographs of the wreckage and the topography of the airport proved that the photographs actually represented different crashes. Prof. Guha also pointed out many contradictions in the evidences given by the Japanese e.g.

- 1) the plane was a new bomber vs. the plane was an old and worn out bomber
- 2) The plane was stationed in Saigon vs. the plane came from Manila (Nonogaki's evidence)
- 3) There were different versions as to who the chief pilot was and who the navigator was of that plane
- 4) versions about seating arrangements within the plane were different by different witnesses
- 5) Nobody could say with certainty where Netaji stayed in Tourane, before flying to Taihoku

- 6) There were different versions by different witnesses on when the plane took off from Tourane and when it landed in Taihoku
- 7) No military dignitary came to receive General Shidei or Netaji in Taihoku, an impossibility in case of General Shidei, the commander in charge of the Manchurian Army of Imperial Japan
- 8) There are multiple versions on how the crash had actually occurred e.g. Habibur Rahman mentioned about a loud report which the Japanese witnesses did not support, some said that the propeller was broken while others told about a broken rear wheel
- 9) there are different versions from different witnesses on where the plane actually crashed
- 10) There are again multiple contradictory versions on what happened to the plane after the crash, for instance whether it was broken. At least one member Nakamura claimed that the plane was intact
- 11) There are differences in the versions of depositions of the same witness before Shah Nawaz Committee and before Khosla Commission e.g. that of Takahashi
- 12) There were contradictory viewpoints on how Netaji could walk out of the plane
- 13) Witnesses like Nonogaki, Takahashi, Taro Kano and Nakamura gave completely different versions of what happened when Netaji came out of the flight, from that of Habibur Rahman, e.g. who helped Netaji after he came out of the plane, whether Netaji was wearing any clothes or all the clothes were taken off
- 14) There was no definite conclusion as to what happened to the body of General Shidei, in what manner it was disposed
- 15) No document could be produced that could prove that a flight had reached Taihoku or took off from the airport or for that matter whether any plane crashed on 18 August 1945. Given the meticulous nature of the Japanese in keeping all documents and records, even during the times of extreme chaos, this is absurd. Japanese discovered Lean Manufacturing & Toyota Production System with emphasis on doing things right. They have a penchant for accuracy and record keeping. There is no evidence that any of the records was destroyed - e.g. Hospital Bed Tickets, indent for pharmaceutical supplies for the treatment, death certificate, crematorium certificate in the name of Subhas Chandra Bose, log book entry of the plane taking off or that of the crash, its flight path, list of passengers, newspaper reports about the plane crash - none exists. Narayan Sanyal in his book has argued that it would have been prudent for Japan to keep meticulous details of Netaji's death records, so that the Japanese Government could be absolved of the charge of helping him to go underground, and yet, none exists
- 16) There were multiple contradictory versions of what happened in the hospital when Netaji was brought there, for instance how long he was conscious, whether he was

given a blood transfusion or not, when actually did his death take place and what was his last testament.

17) There are contradictions galore in Nonogaki's account of who from the Formosa HQ came to pay respect to Netaji's body. As a Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces there should have been participation of very high level Japanese military officers during the death or funeral, but nobody came. Chief of the General Staff of the Formosan Army General Isamaya said that neither he nor General Ando (who according to another staff officer went to this hospital and attended subsequent funeral ceremony) had gone to attend the funeral ceremony. But just a week later he had gone to the airport to receive Dr. Ba Maw and General Tanaka, who were on their way to Tokyo. So the Formosan HQ did not know about the air crash and death of one of their Generals and allied Supreme Commander. Dr. Ba Maw had a lesser status than Netaji.

18) Dr. Yoshimi, who was the main witness from the doctors who treated Netaji said that the body was kept in one corner of the room and a soldier had guarded it and flowers had been placed on it as mark of respect. Habibur took the body next day to crematorium. According to Khosla Commission report a certain Taiwanese was asked to guard Netaji's coffin on which Chandra Bose was written and there were some injured persons in the room. On the following day a truck came and took the body to the crematorium. The same Taiwanese had mentioned that he was kept as a guard on **August 19** - a vital testimony that was deliberately taken out of Khosla commission report

19) Habibur Rahman gives the date of cremation as August 20 in his statement to Shah Nawaz Committee, but in a statement signed by him dated Aug 24, 1945, the date of cremation was Aug 22. One witness major Nagatomo said that the body was cremated on Aug 19, and the Taiwanese witness puts the date as Aug 21. S.A. Ayer was there in Formosa on Aug 20 and yet he was not shown Netaji's body. **It is worth noting that even though Ayer had started for Formosa in a Japanese bomber, it diverted him to Taichu instead of Taihoku, on Aug 20. Col. Tada did this without giving any reasonable explanation**

20) In the crematorium no Japanese Army Head was present, only Habibur Rahman, J Nakamura (interpreter), Major Nagatomo, a Buddhist priest and the crematorium attendant were present. It is to be noted that Harin Shah in his book had given the photograph of Chu Tsan, the cremator. But the cremator's son had declared in the presence of justice Khosla that the photograph was not his father's. The son also said that there was no Indian present, no officer attended, no flowers were presented, in the crematorium. That directly contradicts Habibur Rahman's testimony that he was present

21) Nobody had seen Netaji's body, it was strictly prohibited to touch the coffin. No photograph of the body could be taken that could prove that it was Netaji's body

22) Habibur Rahman had stated that Netaji's face was disfigured, but Dr. Yoshimi told that he bandaged the whole body of Netaji except his face. Why would a disfigured face be left behind from being treated

23) The body was not carried to Tokyo as the coffin was supposedly too large to be conveyed in a plane. General Isoda on the other hand, during his interrogation, had persistently said that Netaji's body was indeed flown to Tokyo and it was not cremated in Formosa

24) There was no enquiry at the alleged air crash site by the Japanese authorities, even though Formosa had been in Japanese control for a long time, until at least 30 September 1945. MacArthur came to Tokyo on 7 September and Chinese and American forces landed in Taihoku even after that. This was confirmed by the foreign office of Japan.

In this manner Prof. Guha had cited around 45 questions in his book Netaji Dead or Alive.

Dr. Yoshimi could not produce a single document in support of Netaji being admitted to the military hospital. He had instead signed the cremation permit of a **Japanese soldier named Ichiro Okura**. The said Ichiro Okura was a Japanese soldier who had died of a heart attack and who had been cremated on Aug 22. He was born in 1900. A death certificate in the name of Chandra Bose suddenly originated in 1988.

Witnesses and Evidences

Prof. Guha goes further to claim that K.K. Shah, the former Information and Broadcasting Minister and Governor of TN, had told him that Nehru never believed the story of Netaji's death and he had personally told this to Shah. Prof. Guha believed that the testimonies of the Japanese witnesses before Shah Nawaz Committee and Khosla commission were nothing but cooked up stories as there were contradictions galore. Gobindo Mukhoty, the counsel of National Committee in Khosla Commission, had observed in front of Justice Khosla about the Japanese witnesses, "What to speak of your Lordship, Sir, even a fool will not believe these stories." Nonogaki, one of most trusted witnesses of Khosla, was proved to be a liar when he claimed himself to be the chief pilot of the plane. Major Takizawa was already recorded as the Chief pilot. There were several other false statements from him - he mentioned the presence of Col. Tada in the airport, while Col. Tada was not there in the airport, or presence of General Ando during the funeral of Netaji, which was also untrue. Similarly another reliable witness Taro Kano claimed to be the navigator, while the navigator as recorded by Shah Nawaz Committee was Sergeant Okista. About the hospital scenes he gave different versions to Khosla and Shah Nawaz. Another witness Takahashi also lied when he said

that the plane split into two halves and doors were open, while all other witnesses said that the plane was intact and the doors were closed. Another witness Sakai told the Khosla commission that he saw the rear wheel breaking away from the place. Others had completely disagreed. Habibur Rahman said that he alone went to put out the flames on Netaji, but Taro Kano said that he did it and not Habibur. Taro Kano and Nonagaki said, contrary to Habibur's claim, that Netaji was made completely naked. Dr. Yoshimi, the other "reliable" witness at first told the allied intelligence that Netaji had died at 11 PM. Later Yoshimi had claimed the time of death to be 8 PM. No nurses who were supposed to have treated Netaji, could be found. Habibur Rahman had said that only the upper part of Netaji's body was completely burnt while Dr. Yoshimi said that the whole body was burnt. There were major discrepancies between the facts given by Habibur Rahman and the facts narrated by Dr. Yoshimi and other Japanese witnesses. This only implies one thing - that Habibur Rahman did not have time to cross verify his story with that of the other Japanese witnesses. Their stories converged in the summary, but differed much in the details. This can only be possible if the details of the stories were curved out independently without having any opportunity to rehearse the parts. Even Dr. Yoshimi's statement that about 400 cc of blood was given to Netaji was contradicted by another doctor in charge, Dr. Tsuruta and Habibur Rahman. Again Habibur Rahman gave out a misleading story to the British Intelligence on what really happened in Saigon. He suppressed the fact that Netaji had planned to travel to Manchuria, and said that Netaji had planned to go to Tokyo. He told a deliberate lie to the British intelligence that the talk between Ishoda and Bose took place in airport, while it really happened in Bose's residence. Habibur Rahman also concealed the fact that he was taken into confidence in all secret meetings of Netaji with the Japanese in Bangkok and Saigon. Habibur Rahman also feigned complete ignorance about the vast qualities of INA treasure that was supposedly with Bose. E. Bhaskaran, the confidential secretary of Netaji, told Khosla commission that Netaji carried four large suitcases containing gold and jewelry. Habibur Rahman also promoted the story of a burnt rectangular wrist watch that he claimed to be of Netaji. But almost all people associated with Netaji including his personal valet Kundan Singh said that Netaji always wore a round watch. The rectangular watch was stopped at 1.10 PM, while the accident had supposedly taken place not before 2.30 PM. Dr. Yoshimi and other Japanese witnesses ruled out the possibility of Netaji's giving out a last testament to Habibur Rahman, which he had claimed in such a dramatic mode. Nonogaki on the other hand had a completely different version of this testament. It is evident that all the principal witnesses including Habibur Rahman, had lied, to varying degrees.

Incidentally when Habibur Rahman came to depose before Shah Nawaz Committee, he was staying in Pakistan High Commission. There Prof. Samar Guha and Sunil Krishna Gupta went to meet him. In reply to the question as to why Habibur Rahman did not contradict the report published in Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore which quoted him claiming that Netaji did not die in plane crash, he told Sunil Krishna Gupta, "Why are you so anxious to demolish a story which has no basis? Let them declare that Netaji is dead. ***It will be our double gain when he will return.***"

In several other instances Habibur Rahman indicated that he merely obeyed the order of Netaji in giving out his story. He told the same to Secretary of the Prime Minister of the princely state of Alwar, Khem Chand, an ICS.

Justice Khosla had alluded to the absence of documents of the air crash or the absence of any protocols in giving a state funeral to Netaji and General Shidei to the chaotic conditions that prevailed there after Japanese surrender. But that does not explain how, despite the "chaotic conditions", Tanaka and Ba Maw could receive full military attention and passed conveniently through Taihoku on 25th August, or Dr. Laurel and other South East Asian leaders reached Tokyo much later and Sakai and Habibur Rahman left for Tokyo with Netaji's ashes on 7th of September, and flight charts were available for those flights. There was no sign of any chaos in Formosa as it was under Japanese occupation until September end.

Prof. Guha gives numerous examples of how Netaji could have planned his departure to Manchuria to seek Russian help and that the top Japanese Generals were ready to help him in executing the plan. The same was evident from the testimony given by Lt. Gen. Takakura to Khosla Commission, which justice Khosla conveniently disregarded. Lt. Gen. Ishoda also told the commission that the purpose of Netaji's flight was to go to Soviet Union. Col. Tada made a disclosure to Ayer that the Japanese Imperial HQ had decided to make a false announcement of Netaji's disappearance once he crossed the borders of Manchuria. The reason that all the Japanese witnesses had stuck to their stories despite glaring contradictions was because they were fiercely loyal to their country's stand in this matter. If the Imperial HQ and South East Asia HQ had asked them to fabricate stories about Netaji's death, they would do so without qualms. It is to be noted that no death certificate or cremation certificate could be produced even for Lt. General Tsunamasa Shidei by the Japanese Government. The cremation permit of Ichiro Okura showed that his body was cremated on Aug 22 and not on Aug 20 as claimed by the Tokyo HQ, the Japanese witnesses and Habibur Rahman. None of Netaji's personal belongings was available, either from the wreckage site or on him personally - like his sacred Gita, Chandi and rosary beads which always used to

accompany him, wherever he went, as per the testimony of Kundan Singh. No evidence could be gathered as to where Netaji stayed in the course of his alleged night halt in Tourane.

Netaji gave an indication of the plan to John Thivy on August 17, when he informed him that he (Netaji) might be involved in an air crash. Netaji had also told Dr. Pabitramohan Roy, not to believe any special news about Netaji and that he would meet Pabitra again. Netaji had asked Anand Mohan Sahay to establish contacts with Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi.

It is also to be noted that Emilie Schenkl did not consent to the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India's request in 1993, to give permission to bring Netaji's ashes from Renkoji Temple to India. However her daughter Dr. Anita Pfuff believes that Netaji died in the air crash and the ashes in Renkoji temple belong to him and should be brought back to India.

In his Dissentient Report, Suresh Chandra Bose, Netaji's elder brother, also detailed out many objections to the air crash theory and suggested that the alleged plane crash was a cover for Netaji to escape according to his own plan. On 23 January 1951, Shah Nawaz himself had made a statement that Netaji was alive. K Satoh and Lt. N.B Das, two witnesses in Shah Nawaz committee stated that they saw Netaji taking off in a separate plane, not the one that contained Habibur Rahman. Dr. Radha Binod Pal also did not believe that Netaji died in Formosa.

In Oi Mahamanab Ase, a great man narrates his escape journey, "Disappearance was planned by HIM. Long ago, before Jap surrender. Even before that he went to Russia and nobody knew it. He returned after one and half months. He planned his disappearance. Jewelry and treasure were packed for dropping at a place of his disappearance. ***First Bomber was a dummy flight with publicity of Him, Kimura and others. Real Bomber left after, for unknown destination.***"

Dr. Satyanarayan Sinha in his book Netaji Rahasya, claimed that he went to Formosa to make an enquiry about the so called death of Netaji. He was informed by a Government official that there was only one air crash in Taihoku and that was on 23rd October, 1944. According to Dr. Sinha, the Japanese had shown the photographs of a different air crash, possibly of the one that happened in 1944. The photographs showed the crash site near a hill while the witness account of the crash in 1945 did not provide any information about the crash happening near a hill. On 8th August Russians had declared war on Japan. A Chinese communist agent who was in India told Dr. Sinha

that Netaji and Shidei boarded a bomber. Netaji had on him the attire of the Supreme Commander of the Azad Hind Government. A certain Taiwanese Colonel also told the same to Dr. Sinha. That person further said that he had himself seen Netaji starting for Dairen on 18th August and he informed the Nationalist Chungking Government on the same. The same colonel, who was working there in the airport, told that Habibur Rahman was tutored by the Japanese on the story to be told. One of his Chinese associates who came in contact with Subhas Bose in Dairen, showed Dr. Sinha a picture of Netaji in the costume of a Confucian monk, taken in 1949, in Dairen. Dr. Sinha also got to know from Goga Mukherjee, the son of Abani Mukherjee, an Indian revolutionary who escaped to Russia, that both Abani Mukherjee and Subhas Bose were interned by Stalin in Yakutsk Gulag. One Trotsky follower who had come back from Gulag claimed that Subhas Bose was imprisoned in the cell no. 45 and Abani Mukherjee in cell no. 57, in and around 1950-51. According to him the Indian embassy and few Congress and Communist leaders who closely worked with the Comintern, informed the Russian leadership that Bose was a Fascist. Accordingly he was imprisoned by Stalin. This revelation by Dr. Sinha had also given credence to the theory that Bose died in Russia. In the MEA file 25/4/NGO - Vol V11, in a deposition before Justice Mukherjee Commission, Prem Das Mukherjee has narrated his conversation with Dr. Satyanarayan Sinha, who had accused that Pandit Nehru knew about the imprisonment and possible death of Subhas Chandra Bose in Russia. Even this was indicated to Dr. Sinha by Khrushchev when he came to visit India.

Netaji Sighting – The Lingering Doubt

There are several instances of sightings of Netaji by confirmed and unconfirmed sources that were presented in the three commissions. Some of these incidents are narrated here. These are discussed at length by Anuj Dhar, a reputed researcher on the topic of Netaji's possible afterlife in his books *Conundrum: Subhas Bose's Life after Death* (co-authored by Chandrachud Ghosh) and *India's Biggest Cover Up*. Many of these are also covered at length in Prof. Samar Guha's *Netaji: Dead or Alive*, in the Netaji files in the National Archives among the declassified documents on Netaji, in newspaper reports and in several contemporary books on the Netaji mystery, including that of Dr. Satyanarayan Sinha, Shyamal Basu (*Subhas Ghare Phere Nai*), Sri Abhijeet (*Taihoku theke Bharate*), in Charanik's *Oi Mahamanab Ase*, in the books and articles written by researchers like Dr. Madhusudan Pal, Keshab Bhattacharya and Dr. Jayanta Choudhuri. Many other researchers, known or unknown, are working in this field, some of their efforts are taking fruit in the form of new information, photos and documents. Since the reputed historians have not bothered to touch this area, it is left up to these

"guerrilla" researchers to dig deeper into the Netaji mystery and unearth valuable jewels.

1. An American journalist/stinger of Chicago Tribune, Alfred Wag, told Pandit Nehru on August 29, 1945 in Delhi that after the Japanese broadcast 'Bose was alive and seen 4 days ago in Saigon'. Wagg also said that Bose should be treated as a war criminal because his men fought and killed many Americans and extorted money from the poor (Hindustan Standard - 30/8/1945). On Sept 11, 1945 Nehru himself told API at Jhansi, 'Like many other people, he did not believe the story about the reported death of Subhas Chandra Bose... 'I have received a number of reports, which have raised me in great doubt and I disbelieve the authenticity of the news'. Niranjan Singh Talib of Punjab Congress told the Khosla Commission that in 1947 he met Wagg at the then Defence Minister Baldev Singh's house, where Wagg showed him some pictures of Netaji taken after his supposed death in the crash. Incidentally in Oi Mahamanab Ase a great man narrates that "unfortunately, surprisingly and accidentally He (Subhas Bose) met, was met, by several Anglo American personnel and Jap petty (unknown) officers at a small hotel near Saigon, quite someday after the crash and Death news." Vandana Garhwal, a Netaji researcher, has dug up the longest of Wagg's statements on Netaji, where Wagg claimed that the French had been mysteriously jumping their paratroopers into an area of Siam which was of little value to them. Wagg was told that it was another effort by the Allied forces to trap Bose (courtesy: Gumnni Baba: A Case History, by Adheer Som).
2. The declassified files reveal an interesting event. The file no 870/11/P/16/92 contains a series of broadcasts over radio, heard by P.C Kar who was monitoring the radio transmissions in Governor House in 1945. He told the Governor R.G Casey that these broadcasts were picked up on 31 m band and possibly were transmitted from Radio Manchuria. The first broadcast came on Dec 26 1945 and it said - " I am at present in the shelter of great world powers. My heart is burning for India. I will go to India on the crest of a Third world war. It may come in ten years or even earlier. Then I will sit upon judgement upon those trying my men at the Red Fort." The second broadcast was on Jan 1 1946 and said, " We must get freedom within next two years. The British imperialism has broken down and it must concede independence to India. India will not be free by means of non violence. But I am quite respectful to Mr. Gandhi. The Third broadcast was in February 1946, "I am Subhas Chandra Bose speaking, Jai Hind. This is the third time I am addressing my Indian brothers and sisters after Japan's surrender...The PM of England is going to send

Mr. Pethick Lawrence and two other members with no object in view other than let the British imperialism a permanent settlement by all means to suck the blood of India."

3. The declassified files also refer to a communication by Khurshed Naoroji to Mountbatten, saying, 'At heart the Indian Army is sympathetic to INA. If Bose comes with the help of Russia, neither Gandhiji, nor Nehru nor Congress will be able to reason with the country.'

4. Gallacher, British Communist leader, said that he had definite information that Bose secretly visited UK in 1946 to meet de Valera, president of Ireland, who was a great personal friend.

5. In 1948, De Valera, as president of Ireland, came to visit India. When asked about Bose he said that he hoped to meet him in India.

6. In 1946, Deben Sen, an ex M.P, while travelling with Joglekar, a trade union leader of Bombay, was going to attend a Labour Conference in France. They saw a Netaji lookalike in Marseilles airport, surrounded by white bodyguards. He was dressed in military uniform. Deben knew Netaji intimately in India. When Deben Sen tried to approach him, he just signed him not to come nearby. Deben Sen informed Sarat Chandra Bose who advised him not to mention this story publicly. Deben later revealed this incident to Chapalakanta Bhattacharya of Hindustan Standard Patrika, who reported the same to G.D Khosla. Khosla ignored this testimony. In fact, Gallacher had mentioned that Bose visited Ireland to see De Valera during this time. His statement lent support to Deben's accidental meeting of Netaji. In Khosla commission report the same incident is narrated in a different way, that Deben met Netaji standing near a bathroom in the airport

7. Ardhendu Sarkar, a Bengali engineer working for Heavy engineering corporation in Ukraine had a most fascinating story to tell. Sarkar worked in Machine Building Plant in Gorlovka near the city Doniesk. While working on a site in USSR, his colleague Zerovin, a German Jew, who was the deputy chief of the plant in which he was working, told Sarkar that he had met Bose in Berlin in 1941 and therefore knew him quite well. Zerovin said that he was captured by the Russians after the fall of Berlin and was sent to a reorientation camp in Siberia. The camp was in Siberian-Mongolian border. Zerovin said that in that reorientation camp which was meant for foreign politicians and professionals, he met Subhas Chandra Bose. Bose was given

a diplomat status by Russia and had a car and two private Mongolian bodyguards who might have been KGB men. It appeared to him that Bose was well looked after. Zerovin approached Bose and told him that he had met him in Berlin, Bose replied that it was quite likely. Bose also told him that he was likely to return to India soon. When they began to speak in German, the Mongolian bodyguard intervened and said "not allowed". Zerovin also warned Sarkar not to disclose the incident in Russia as it would endanger them both. Ardhendu reported this to the second secretary in charge of the Indian consulate in Moscow with the result that he had to lose his job and had to come back to India. Nobody would believe him and he almost lost his career. Sarkar told Samar Guha about this incident and also revealed that Bose was present in Russia at least until 1961

8. In 1956 Muthuramalingam Thevar, who was a staunch Bose loyalist and was called the Bose of the South, later a Forward Block leader, made a most astonishing claim to Hindustan Standards. He said that in 1950 he managed to cross over to China on being requested by an ailing Sarat Bose. There he met Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in January 1950, and even stayed with him for sometime in an unknown location in China. He claimed that he could show evidence of his travel to China if requested

9. Balraj Trikha made a claim that he saw Netaji Subhas in a military uniform in Saigon airport in 1971. Trikha was no Netaji admirer or sensationalist. On behalf of him the claim was made by Prem Bhatia, Indian High Commissioner in Singapore, in front of Khosla commission. Justice Khosla discredited the evidence as deliberate falsification because Balraj Trikha failed to appear before the commission for cross examination when summoned

10. Main witness of the air crash theory Habibur Rahman told Sunil Krishna Gupta privately while he came to testify in front of Shah Nawaz committee, "let him (Netaji) come back, we'll have double gain - we'll have him and it will expose those who are trying to declare him as dead."

11. Samar Guha, the veteran parliamentarian and long time fighter for establishing the rightful place of Netaji in the history of India, declared in parliament that Netaji was alive and he knew it. Only he could not disclose his identity and location. After this Guha was discredited for publishing a fake photograph of an aged Netaji which he claimed was given to him by his political opponent. Out of frustration he revealed to his friends, "if he (Netaji) does not want to come out what can I do."

12. Atul Sen, veteran parliamentarian and a long time associate of Netaji, wrote to Nehru (after meeting a certain sadhu in Neemsar in 1962) that, Netaji was alive and if Nehru could guarantee that he would not be handed over to the allied forces, he (Atul), would convince Netaji to come out of his hiding. Nehru's answer was most enigmatic. The PM, who had claimed just 6 years back in parliament that there was no doubt that Bose was dead, said that, there was no question of handing him over to the allied forces. He never responded to the first statement, viz. that Netaji was alive. When the Shaulmari episode had come up, Nehru even sent Surendra Mohan Ghosh, another associate of Netaji, to see for himself if the sadhu Saradananda was indeed Netaji. Surendra, after meeting the sadhu, said that he was not Netaji. Why would a prime minister, confident of the death of his political adversary, would send a trusted emissary to check on a false trail, unless he himself was not sure

13. After gaining independence, a jubilant Sheikh Mujib made a significant statement in front of a large gathering - That Bangladesh has gained independence proves that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is alive. Later after meeting Indira Gandhi, he explained his statement that he meant that the spirit of Netaji i.e. love for freedom was alive

14. Netaji's erstwhile driver in Azad Hind Government, Nizamuddin, claimed that he met N.G Swami, one of the top-secret service men of Netaji's Azad Hind Government, in Varanasi in 1971. Swami told him that Netaji was alive and was in U.P as a sadhu

15. Aswini Kumar Gupta, Jt. editor of Hindustan Standard, stated that in May 1951, when he was in the Naga Hills area, he met Naga leader Mr. Phizo. Phizo told him that he was informed beforehand that a plane crash involving Netaji would be announced, but he was not to believe it. Mr. Gupta further told that he heard from the Mishmi tribal leaders, that they were told by the Chinese Commanders that one great Indian leader was with them. The Chinese took them to an interior place where they saw a person resembling Netaji's picture, attired in military uniform sitting in a tent and the Chinese told them that he was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

16. Moradoff, the Russian Vice Consul General in Tehran, disclosed that Bose was in Russia where he was secretly organizing a group of Russians to work for the freedom of India

17. Mawu Angami, (Witness No. 202 in Khosla commission) a Naga political leader, associated with Phizo for several years, claimed that he met Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Penang in April 1958, through some INA personnel in Burma. However he had no previous knowledge of how Bose looked like apart from some photographs, so his deposition was rejected by Khosla on the grounds of being unreliable

18. There are many random sightings of Netaji reported in the Khosla commission, e.g by a taxi driver in Delhi who saw Netaji dressed as a sadhu. He had seen Subhas Bose earlier in 1939. One Swami Nirvanananda saw a person in Siliguri along with two Germans in a jeep in 1962, who introduced himself as Subhas Bose. One Mahesh Chander (Witness No. 25 in Khosla Commission) claimed to have seen Bose near Jadugir-ka-Bagh, Meerut, on 7-10-67 and accompanied him to Banaras. He had met Bose briefly earlier in 1939. Justice Khosla had not taken heed of these evidences as they appeared to him as unreliable and mere rumor mongering.

19. There is also evidence of S.M Goswami who weaved a tale which somewhat resembles the facts presented in the book Oi Mahamanab Ase. He mentioned about Netaji being in China and acting as an adviser to Mao. He claimed that Netaji was trained in guerrilla warfare and raised an army of 4-5 million strong and called it as Asian Liberation Army. It was this army that participated in the Korean war and in Vietnam war and had defeated the American forces. Netaji was given to rule over a territory across the Himalayas in an autonomous region in eastern Tibet which he had developed beautifully with all modern amenities of warfare. Netaji had a goal of unifying Bengal and India as he was deeply disturbed by the partition of India and what he felt as the treachery of Nehru and other Indian politicians. However there were several improbable claims made by Goswami like Hitler fought in the Korean war side by side with Netaji or Netaji Subhas wanted to attack India in 1962 to unify Bengal and since British and American forces were called upon by Nehru he on behalf of China declared a unilateral ceasefire. These and other such claims made his deposition extremely unreliable in front of Khosla Commission

20. J.B.P More, the famous Paris based historian, had found a French secret intelligence report dated 11 Dec 1947 in the National Archives of France. More states that the French intelligence report did not believe that Netaji died in an air crash. Instead it had mentioned that Bose's present whereabouts were unknown as late as Dec, 1947. "He escaped from Indo-China border alive and his whereabouts were unknown as late as December 11, 1947, as reported in the secret document. This implies that he was alive somewhere but not dead in 1947," said More in the ET

report citing the French report written for the “Haut Commissariat de France for Indochina” SDECE Indochinese Base BCRI No.41283 csah Ex No. 616, under the title: “Archival Information on Subhas Chandra Bose.” More said that: “In this report, it is clearly stated that he was the ex-chief of the Indian Independence League and a member of Hikari Kikan, a Japanese organization. It is further stated clearly that he escaped from Indochina, though it does not state how.” (source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/here-is-why-this-french-researcher-believes-netaji-didnt-die-in-1945-4754305/>) This somewhat tallies with what Alfred Wagg had claimed in 1945

J.B.P More had also informed that there was another French secret service report dated Sep 26, 1945, sent by the Control Commission of the Allies in Saigon to the Supreme Allied Commander in Singapore (Lord Mountbatten). It stated that seven persons including “three big personalities” were arrested by the authorities. It added that they were also members of Hikari-Kikan. More believed that one of those persons was Bose and another was his step grandfather Leon Puruchandy, who was a close associate of Bose. This was because Mr. Puruchandy was arrested in September 1945 and was released three months later. But he was severely tortured and slipped into amnesia and his condition, after the release, was in a vegetative state till his death in 1968. He was possibly given such a harsh treatment to know the whereabouts of Bose who had escaped from Indo China. Bose apparently stayed in Leon Puruchandy's house on the night of 17th August in Saigon, and not in Tourane as was claimed by Habibur Rahman and the Japanese witnesses of the plane crash

21. In 2013, Rathin Maharaj, in charge of the Ramakrishna Mission Moscow chapter said that he had knowledge of Netaji spending his lives in a Siberian prison. The monk claimed that Vijayalakshmi Pandit saw Netaji in the prison in a very poor condition of health. He claimed that there were documents in Russian archive which could have corroborated the story, which were later stolen. Researcher Liliana Malkova, who was in Belur Math, agreed with the monk but said that there was no record of Netaji's presence in Russia and it was unlikely that he died in a Russian prison. It is to be noted that historian and researcher Dr. Purabi Roy had claimed that Netaji had died in a Russian prison. Historian Hari Vasudevan claimed that Subhas Chandra Bose's emissary had been traced in Moscow. He along with Purabi Roy and Sovanlal Duttagupta, had gone to Russia to hunt through the Russian archives for evidence on Netaji

(source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Russia-holds-clue-to-Netaji-riddle-Historian/articleshow/18359505.cms>)

22. As per declassified files, Narendra Sindkar, had filed an affidavit in Justice Mukherjee Commission, claiming that Netaji was in Russia. Narendra was in Moscow from 1966 to 1991 as an announcer in Radio Moscow. He came in close contact with Communist Party members from India. He was acquainted with Nikhil Chattopadhyay, son of Birendranath Chattopadhyay, who was an Indian revolutionary and brother of Sarojini Naidu, who took refuge in Russia in the early 1920s. Nikhil apparently served as an interpreter for Subhas Chandra Bose when he had traveled to Berlin via Moscow, in 1941. According to the affidavit Nikhil had claimed that Nehru conspired to keep Netaji in Russia in a long exile. As Netaji had reached Russia via Manchuria, Stalin, Molotov, Beria and Vorochilov had consulted the India experts, notably the communist Party members unsympathetic to Bose. They had advised to consult Krishna Menon in London through the Soviet Embassy. Menon had asserted in favour of Nehru. Nikhil and his wife Titiana had top contacts in KGB and they had arranged for secret meeting with Netaji in Omsk, in 1968. It is to be noted that any enquiry on Netaji's Russian connections had hit a stonewall. Only bits and pieces of information could come out on account of the efforts by Indian researchers like Dr. Purabi Roy and Hari Vasudevan, who went to Russia on a trip sponsored by the Asiatic Society - that there was a plenipotentiary of INA in Omsk. Major General Alexander Kolesnikov as per claims of Dr. Roy, had indicated to her that Subhas Bose was in Russia in 1946 and there was a discussion between Molotov and Stalin as to what to do with him. There is a claim that a certain person appearing in a photo taken during Tashkent treaty in 1966, was actually Netaji and facial recognition found certain matches. But there was nothing conclusive about the so called Tashkent man

23. Sarat Bose himself did not believe that Subhas had died in the plane crash. After he had come back from his Europe trip in 1949, Sarat Bose had written an article in Nation paper claiming that Subhas Bose was in Red China, as per 'No Secrets', written by Anuj Dhar. Swiss journalist Lily Abegg, who was in Japan during the war, told Sarat Bose that she met American and British intelligence officials who told her that Subhas did not die in any plane crash. The same was corroborated by the Japanese military officers whom she had met. Mumbai based tabloid Blitz carried a news headlined that British report Bose alive in Red Continent in 1949. Debnath Das had told Khosla commission that one of the plans of Netaji was to go to Yunan province of China, the HQ of Mao Tse Tung, to seek his help in carrying out the campaign against the British

24. Prof. Samar Guha highlights in a letter to Gorbachev in 1988 (available in netajipapers.gov.in) that in a secret report the British intelligence had stated that Ghilzai Malang (Ghilzai was a tribe in Afghanistan and Malang meant monk) had been coupling with live Bose in Russia and in December 1945 a report said that the Governor of Afghan province Khost had been informed by the Russian Ambassador in Kabul that there were many Congress refugees in Moscow and Bose was included in their number

25. In the same letter to President Gorbachev Prof. Guha had alleged that Dr. S Radhakrishnan, who was the second Indian Ambassador in Moscow, confided in his close friend Dr. S. Das, then head of philosophy department in Calcutta University, and Dr. R.C Majumdar, noted historian, that he came to know that Bose was kept captive in Stalin's Russia

26. Dr. Y.S Yurlova of the Soviet Institute of the Oriental Studies told press reporters in Calcutta in 1990 that the Soviet Government possessed certain top-secret documents on Subhas Chandra Bose

27. There is an interesting anecdote of Sayantan Dasgupta, one of the founder members of Mission Netaji, as to how he stumbled upon the possible Vietnam connections of Netaji Subhas. Full text of his findings is given here - <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/evidence-shows-netaji-could-have-been-alive-in-vietnam-much-after-his-official-death-250577.html>

The photo in the article reminds one of a statement made by a great man in Oi Mahamanab Ase - "Ho Chi Minh's pride of nine generals and a **shadow** behind them."

Report on the denial of the reported air crash by the Taiwan authorities - http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4236189.stm

"Taiwan has now told an Indian investigation that **there were no plane crashes at Taipei between 14 August and 20 September 1945**".

A Hermit in UP – All about Mahakal

Kalayati iti Kaalah (One who keeps account is Kaalah or End/Nemesis)

कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृतप्रवृद्धो

लोकान्समाहर्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः

|

ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे

ये�वस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः (Gita: Chapter 11, verse 32) (source: <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/>)

kālo 'smi loka-kṣhaya-kṛit pravṛiddho

lokān samāhartum iha pravṛittah

rīte 'pi tvāṁ na bhaviṣhyanti sarve

ye 'vasthitāḥ pratyānīkeśhu yodhāḥ

I am Kaala, the supreme annihilator, engaged in the destruction of the worlds. All the warriors will cease to exist, even if you do not fight.

Shaulmari - A facade?

In the 1960s one Sadhu Saradananda, belonging to the Shaulmari ashrama, was speculated to be Netaji and it created some sensations in the early part of 1960 when long term Netaji associates like Major Satya Gupta declared him to be Netaji. Even Uttamchand Malhotra, who had sheltered Netaji in Kabul, had later claimed that the Shaulmari sadhu was none other than Netaji and had taken initiative to collect funds for him. Nehru took notice of the controversy and sent Surendra Mohan Ghosh to check the facts. The interest soon petered out as Saradananda never came out in public to declare himself as Netaji. He was later identified to be a former revolutionary belonging to the Anushilon samity, who had escaped conviction. He still had some committed disciples like Suresh Padhye who thought him to be Netaji. He also met few INA men like Col. Thakur who believed him to be Netaji. He later died in Dehra Dun in 1977.

Another great man had claimed about the Shaulmari episode that it was a facade, a "parallel bluff". The great man was known as Mahakal.

Critics of Netaji's afterlife refuse to believe that he could become a hermit. Their main points of contention are two - actually one if we look closely - 1) A person like Netaji cannot remain hidden for so long. It's uncharacteristic of him, who was always a man of action 2) "Netaji was a Tiger. Tigers don't hide. To the second contention Adheer Som has a response in his book, chapter "Impossible", "a) sannyasa is not a form of hiding but of spiritual pursuit in seclusion that has long been a hallowed Indian tradition; and b) **Tigers DO hide - they hide when they are hunted, they hide when they hunt, and they hide as they bide their time to spring.**" The first contention, however, is answered by a mysterious hermit - Mahakal.

Dead Ghost, or Mahakal

A series of articles appeared in the Jayasree magazine by a person of a certain penname called Charanik, which created some flutter in the later 1960s and 1970s. The writings were abstruse and cryptic and they portrayed the teachings of a certain spiritual person named Mahakal who used to call himself a Mrito Bhoot or dead ghost. The narrations were based on journals and notes of the disciples of the aforementioned Mahakal. Some of the intelligent minds could guess the true identity of Mahakal, but the way the articles were written, they never gave away the names and the locations. Seasoned journalists like Barun Sengupta however sensed that there were more behind these articles and conjectured whether they pertained to Netaji. The articles only provided the activities, the viewpoints - both political and spiritual, and some form of after life of a super human who was dead to the society. Since then, the articles have been republished by Jayasree in a book titled Oi Mahamanab Ase. The book has also been translated to English, but is not widely available.

The dead ghost in this narrative says(translated), "*Do you know what a ghost thinks? A ghost understands everything. After the ghost leaves his belongings, those whom he had left behind would be redesigning them according to their own desires. The new owners think, 'We are enjoying his property and wealth, he must not return anymore to make claims. We must ensure that he does not return. He should not be able to provide any proof that he has returned. Make some grand designs so that he can never make a claim even if he comes back from dead.'*" The ghost, perhaps, laughs! What he has renounced....could he make any claim on that? The ghost goes back, with a shrill, hearty laugh, and waits bidding his time." - An apt description of the state of mind of a person

who is officially dead and whom the state leaders refuse to accept for the fear of losing their position.

The narrative also compares, in a most cryptic form, the narrator, to king Nala in Mahabharata, who was bitten by the snake *Karkotaka*, whom he had saved from fire. In response to Nala's accusation that *Karkotaka* was a traitor, the snake said that he had returned the favour as Nala's enemies now wouldn't be able to identify him. He would be able to get back his form whenever he desired to return.

The narrator is a *Sadhaka*, a devotee of the mother Sri Durga Kali, whom he identifies with the *janani janmabhumi* or the mother land. The *Sadhaka* is a sannyasin but his preferred spiritual sadhana is Tantra. He has already realized mother Kali who had ordered him to work for her. It is her bidding that he is doing. His sadhana, mission is to see a rejuvenated India that is *Akhanda*, all areas restored and it would regain its place in the world as the spiritual master of all races and nations.

We'll try to deconstruct some of the activities of this Mahamanab as per his sayings - After being declared dead the Mahamanab or Mahakal went to China and from there to Russia. Before moving to China (Manchuria), Mahakal stayed in Saigon and Ho Chi Minh was his host. He participated in the November conference in Vietnam and helped Vietnamese Government in their war against the French. In 1946 he moved to Russia and met Stalin. He was possibly interned in a Gulag in Russia for some time, briefly, but then gained the confidence of the Russian leadership who allowed him to move to China. They also helped him establish a secret base which he keeps referring to as his horizon, somewhere in the remote, uninhabited stretches of Siberia or near the Central Asia (Pamir) - a vast no man's land that does not come under any international jurisdiction. The Horizon conducts top secret work for the welfare of the world in general but India in particular.

Mahakal became a great friend of Mao in China and helped Mao in gaining power. He helped him in many ways in devising strategies to conquer and defeat his enemies. Mao returned his favour by being absolutely loyal to him.

Mahakal moved to India by traversing the length and breadth of the Himalayas but often traveled back to his "base".

Mahakal as General Death or General Shiva helped Dalai Lama cross over to India and helped in organizing the Tibetan revolution as a leader of the Khampa tribe. He also helped North Vietnam in its war against the US. He advised the poet president to drop

truckloads of addictive (cocaine) among the American troops which helped in decimating them. War, according to him, is a cold, calculated affair, and should be devoid of emotions. Mahakal also played a significant role in the liberation of Bangladesh by actively working in organizing the *Mukti Bahini* forces and training them in guerrilla warfare.

Last but not the least, Mahakal's goal and vision is to restore the unity and integrity of India and he would appear again when his goal is achieved. After that he would disappear forever. He explained how the maps of the world would be changed.

Mahakal was very bitter about Communism. He predicted that the "Godless creed, which is just a few centuries old, would surely die. It would die at its source." He was working actively to ensure its destruction.

Jayasree, the magazine was started by Leela Nag Roy, a famous revolutionary, in 1931. Its cover page was designed by Nandalal Bose and the introductory message was given by Rabindranath Tagore. Because of its uncompromising stand during the British rule and its open support for the revolutionaries, it was banned for a brief period by the British. Jayasree was and still is a magazine dedicated to Indian Nationalism and in promoting the ideals of Subhas Chandra Bose.

(Images below: From left to right - Leela Roy, Biplobi Trailokya Maharaj, Dilip Kumar Roy – courtesy Wikipedia)



A Brief History – Importance of the Bhagwanji's Missionaries

Leela Roy nee Nag, was an inspiration herself. Born in the year 1900, she was a well respected freedom fighter, founder of Deepali Sangha, a champion of woman's

emancipation, established schools for women's education, and was the first woman M.A from Dhaka University. Her future husband Anil Roy, a philosopher and fellow revolutionary, was the founder member of Sri Sangha, a revolutionary organization. Together they aligned with Subhas Chandra Bose, the rising star of Indian Nationalism. Leela Nag had been instrumental in helping Subhas in organizing relief efforts during the North Bengal floods. Leela was invited to speak on women's role in the 1928 Congress organized by Subhas in Calcutta. She had set up a Martial Arts training school for women. She became a member of the planning commission of Congress when Subhas became the president of Congress in 1938. Before that she and Anil Roy were in jail for five years, soon after starting Jayasree. Preetilata Wadeddar, an architect of Chattagram uprising and armoury raid in fact originally belonged to Sri Sangha.

When Subhas Bose went to East Bengal in 1940, Leela Roy and her organization became his pillar of support. Leela and Anil were staunchly with Subhas even when he was driven out of Congress, and they joined the Forward Bloc. After Subhas's escape, Leela and Anil were again jailed by the British during Quit India Movement and remained in jail until 1946. Netaji wanted to enlist Leela's help. In fact he wanted her to come over to Burma and Singapore and join the INA. The plan was that when INA soldiers would cross the frontiers of India there would be a huge uprising in Bengal and Leela and Anil's Sri Sangha would play a pivotal role. However betrayal and jealousy of some other revolutionary organizations derailed this plan. Leela and Anil came out of the British prison in 1946. The news of Netaji's plane crash had come. The forward bloc had split into two and Leela and Anil formed the Subhasist Forward Bloc. They had a band of young followers who were staunch Subhash loyalists and would do anything for him. Leela was elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal in 1946. Leela played a very active role in helping the riot victims, esp. women in Noakhali and other parts of Bengal that were torn apart by the violence. Thousands of Hindu women were raped, others were murdered and forcefully converted. Leela and her organization, with their limited resources and means, worked tirelessly among the victims to rehabilitate them, and provide them strength and support. She was accompanying Gandhiji in his tour of the riot torn parts. In the early 1950s she lost her long time companion and husband. After that she focused entirely on running homes for destitute women and resettlement of refugees.

In 1963, when prof Atul Sen discovered Bhagwanji in a Shivalaya in Neemsar, news reached Leela through Dr. Pabitramohan Roy, the ex INA intelligence officer who had been instructed to contact the beloved Didi. Dr. Roy was given a list of items to be procured but had no idea how to get them and hence he approached Didi for the same.

Leela got the items in no time and she also got the news of the "return of the king". She was amazed but she wanted to verify herself. "The eternal impossible comes in the disguise of eternal possibilities", she wrote in her memoir. After a painful wait she finally met her "Leader" and what transpired after that was written in the books, "Gumnami Baba, a Case History" by Adheer Som, "Conundrum, Subhas Bose's life after death" by Anuj Dhar and Chandrachud Ghosh, "India's Biggest Cover Up", by Anuj Dhar, Dr. Madhusudan Pal's book, and other investigative reports on Bhagwanji that have been published since 1985.

Leela took care of all material needs of Bhagwanji. She ensured that he got the best possible health care through her trusted revolutionary cum kaviraj Kamalakanta Ghosh (fondly called as Kamal by Bhagwanji) and homeopathic doctor S.K Das. Then she sent words to several people who she knew would keep the secret, including Dr. R.C Majumdar and Netaji's friend Dilip Kumar Roy. Bhagwanji had told her that the time was not ripe for him to come out and that his enemies whom he referred to as the "JLN combination", were keeping a hawk eyed watch for any movement whatsoever. They knew that he was alive, but they did not know his coordinates, because of his extremely spartan lifestyle and his ability to keep himself out of the reach of common people. He never came out in public and always talked from behind a curtain. People who were lucky to see his face reported that they saw an unearthly glow - e.g. Surajit Dasgupta who deposed before Mukherjee Commission. They could not keep looking into his eyes for long, so powerful and intense was his gaze. That would have hindered a normal conversation and possibly that was why he always remained behind the curtain. But his voice was unmistakable and so were his mannerisms. In fact Leela Roy told him categorically that its good that he chose the remote villages of UP for hiding. Had he been in Bengal he would have been found out even if he had remained behind "seven walls". She said that his style of delivering Bengali speeches remained unchanged, that little stammer, that prolonging of sentences... those words that were used, all remained exactly the same (as that of Subhas Chandra Bose) and she could vividly recollect the earlier interactions, the places, the circumstances. The style is the man himself. Bhagwanji was concerned and sought advices from Lee as to how he could change his style so that anybody else could not detect him.

Bhagwanji's Activities and Followers

His 'Lee' came back and informed a select group of intellectuals and her own band of die hard followers of Sri Sangha who never forsook Netaji even under extreme duress. She informed Dilip Kumar Roy who was a sannyasi in Haridwar that his friend had come

back. She informed intellectuals who were staunch followers of Subhas and who had never got any favour from Nehru, like Dr. R. C Majumdar, the noted historian who was the first to assert that it was INA that had won the independence from British and not Gandhian non-violence, Swami Aseemanand Saraswati, Trailokya Chakrabarty Maharaj the eminent freedom fighter from East Bengal who shared the same cell in the Mandalay with Subhas (and later joined his rival camp), Ashrafuddin Ahamad Chaudhury, a minister in East Pakistan and a close former follower of Subhas, Ashutosh Ganguli, Bina Bhaumik nee Das, daughter of Beni Madhab Das, Subhas's teacher, mentor and guide whose photo was found in the possession of Bhagwanji, and the Bengal Volunteer stalwarts Hemchandra Ghosh and Satyaranjan Bakshi. She sent her emissaries and trusted aides, Sunil Das, brother of revolutionary Anil Das, another Anil Das, who was an ex INA man, Kamalakanta Kaviraj, a revolutionary and a close associate of Kaviraj Vimalananda Tarkatirtha, who was deputed to treat Bhagwanji, Santosh Bhattacharya (Tosh), another Sri Sangha veteran who served Subhas when he was in East Bengal, Shailendra Das, Mrs. Shaila Sen, Apurba Ghosh, Dulal Nandy (Brajanandan) and later Bijoy Nag, her own nephew and adopted son.

A day before he disappeared, Netaji had met Anil Das of INA and told him to remain prepared and also had asked Hikari Kikan to equip him with transmitters and revolvers. Along with INA veteran Dr. Pabitramohan Roy, another revolutionary Ashutosh Kahli met Bhagwanji and had correspondences with him until his accidental death. Trailokya Maharaj had correspondences with Bhagwanji and identified him as his cell mate and stated that the "oppressed people of Bengal eagerly awaits deliverance from their suffering by their beloved leader." Another person who was in constant touch was Forward Bloc leader Professor Samar Guha. After 1979 however when Samar Guha had published a fake photo of Netaji to prove that he had come back, he fell out of favour and Bhagwanji debarred him from further visits. It is to be noted that Bhagwanji never agreed for any photograph of his. He also prevented others from recording his voice. He was not known to the outside world other than his trusted and devoted band of disciples and followers. They were under oath to keep his secret.

Kamalakanta, Sunil Das, Dulal and Santosh rendered all possible services. In fact after meeting Bhagwanji the sole concern and aim of life of Leela Roy was to take care of his health and material well being. As testified by Rajkumar Shukla, before Leela came, they - his mother Saraswati Shukla, an unlettered widow, daughter of Mahadev Mishra, a priest in Nepal who accompanied Bhagwanji from Nepal to India, himself, and Bhagwanji, had very little means for sustenance. They had no place for living and lived under a polythene sheet for several months and ate whatever chance provided. In

Bhagwanji's own language he did "Akashvritti or Yayati Vritti". It was after meeting Leela Roy that they no longer had any problem of basic needs. This was another mystery. Even though Bhagwanji knew all the bigwigs of UP Government and also several rich people, he never took any help from any of them.

After he had his "punarmilan" with his "Lee" Bhagwanji opened himself up to reveal his intentions and plan and his past exploits, esp. what happened after the "plane crash". About the young adjutant Habibur Rahman, who stood by his order he had said in the course of a conversation (translated), "A complete man, he never swerved from what was ordered to him, even under extreme provocation." Many letters were written to Lee where he had provided spiritual and political advices to her, and where he revealed his plan of action often in cryptic language. He also revealed his vision, plan and action to the group of die hard followers and those visions and plans appeared as articles in the Jayasree Patrika from 1966 onwards, written under pen name "Charanik". Later all these articles were compiled in the book "Oi Mahamanab Ase". It was Sunil Das, also fondly called as "Mukul" by Bhagwanji, who initially wrote under that pen name. Later Sri Bijoy Nag took up that responsibility. Here Bhagwanji refers to himself as "Mahakal". He was a devotee of the goddess Durga Kali who had entrusted him with a mission To Bhagwanji, the eternal Shakti, mother Durga Kali also stood for his country, his "Janani Janmabhoomi" Bengal and he was extremely pained and saddened by the partition inflicted upon her by power hungry, corrupt politicians. To restore her back to her former self and old glory was his sadhana, his mission and purpose. For that he was ready to lead a life of complete self abnegation and self effacement. He had no plans of coming back to the political arena as in his own words, "Indian politics - ugh, it stinks."

Slowly and steadily he opened up to his followers about his life as a "Mrito Bhoot", the activities of the dead ghost and the earth shattering consequences of his mission and sadhana of accomplishing mother Kali's tasks. "The Bengal shall rise; Godless greedy creed of communism will die at the place of its birth." He had a vision of restoring India to her former glories and to her former shape, by restoring her to the former self, and that was the end to which he and his "horizon" were working, often bringing major upheavals across the world. He revealed to Lee that his work and activity spread across the entire Asia and beyond, liberating nations from the tyranny of the Western powers. "You cannot imagine what powers this dead ghost is wielding and what are his spheres of influences, your head will reel if I tell you." He said that indisciplined democracy is a mobocracy, a demoscocracy, in the context of Indian democracy.

'This time, No chances, No mistakes, No failures.' that's why he had to live in secrecy, in deprivation. He also possibly contacted Suresh Bose in total secrecy, through messengers like Sukrit or Sunil Krishna. Years later we got to know the reason. Declassified documents revealed that IB of Nehru under B.N Mallik snooped on the family members for a long time for any possible contacts. IB knew that the dead man was walking but possibly did not know his intentions and motive as well as the exact coordinates.

Sarat Bose had died peacefully in 1950 knowing that his favorite Subi was in China. An Interpress report (German equivalent of IB) corroborated that Subhas was in China. The same was claimed by M. Thevar, a close Subhas follower, in 1956 in a press conference. Deben Sen saw a uniformed Subhas Bose in Marseilles airport who forbade him to approach him. Suresh Bose submitted his dissentient report as part of the Shah Nawaz committee which was not accepted by the Government of Nehru. An original copy of the dissentient report, with a note, "To my beloved Devar, immortal be thou" (brother in law) was found among Bhagwanji's belongings in Ram Bhavan. Lalita Bose, who visited Ram Bhavan after Bhagwanji's death, after reading the investigative series in Northern India Patrika, recognized that handwriting on the report and confirmed that it was her mother's.

One of the key and profound statements of Bhagwanji in the book Oi Mahamanab Ase is that "I have undergone a complete Metamorphosis." In fact this is the theme taken by Anuj Dhar and Chandrachud Ghosh in their last chapter of the book Conundrum, Subhas Bose's Life After Death. The key point which Bhagwanji wanted to make is that one should not try to compare him with his earlier self, going by his statements, activities and professed ideologies twenty, thirty or forty years ago, as he had changed completely, through the experiences and the ordeals undergone by him.

Character of Bhagwanji and his prophecies

The Mahamanab or the great man was an astute military strategist, possessed a superhuman sense of international affairs whereby he predicted a lot of events even before they occurred. He says, to quote from Oi Mahamanab Ase - "Spread over a period, shocks after shocks with mounting crescendo SHALL be coming (to India). A deep deep malign cancer is sapping out the vital saps of India. Like a Devilish Octopus it has spread over and caught in its tentacles the whole body and spread over and outside. It has been thus for two thousand years. A most serious disease, fatal and malign, requires more than equal serious diagnosis and treatment..."

'What is obtained too cheap - is esteemed too lightly. The present Government and party (and people too), obtained this freedom too cheap. Rude shocks are needed to jolt them up."

"Diabolical Godless Communism shall be buried 1000 fathoms deep, never to rise"
"Only China proper (shorn of her skirt frills) shall live, sans Communism."

Mahakal, the name that he had given himself had only contempt for contemporary Indian politics - "Indian politics...urgh..it stinks." Reminds us of a person who was greatly betrayed and hurt by the politicians once, way back in 1939, when despite winning the presidential election of Congress he had to step down because Gandhivadis won't let him function. By irony of fate the same Gandhivadis became the rulers of India. The Mahamanab had stated in a letter, "You can't imagine what vexatious dog life this dead man is living." He went without proper food for three years while staying in Neemsar and other places in U.P, had to take shelter under a tarpaulin and had to endure many miseries, all for the sake of his nation.

About East Pakistan he had predicted well before the Bangladesh war, "after some years it will be a line written in history that area was known for a short time as Pakistan." But at the same time he warned against reuniting Bengal. He said, "you and your people let East Bengal get the whole - gamut of the thing. Never, never anyone of you shout and shriek for United Bengal for heaven's sake...Them, the Muslims of East Bengal have been so primed as to be in no mood to be united with Hindu West Bengal. They want to taste independent Muslim Bengal. Let the Muslims of East Bengal have it seemingly on their own gas, first." and then comes a chiller, "The next stage shall crop up thereafter". Did he foresee the murder of democracy in Bangladesh along with the extermination of the entire family of Sheikh Mujib? He warned his disciples from East Bengal, not to go to the other side after mid of August 1975, beforehand. He was extremely upset about partition of India, esp. the brutal rape and killing of thousands of Hindu women and children. He said that women were carried in shiploads to Africa and Middle East for becoming sex slaves. He said that conservative Muslims don't like Hindus because they know that the Hindus are cowards, that they will flee at the first signs of trouble. But they know to obey when they see a commanding presence - "with a thundering whip and a stern command". Did he talk about himself, that as a leader he was one unifying presence over religious divisions? He said that the world worships bravery and strength. He said that what India needed were brilliant military strategists. After Chanakya no master strategist was ever born in India and the nation did not invest in developing its military power. Therefore it paid heavily for the two thousand years. Now he said something more significant, "Remember, your men are in

every key place here and overseas. This time their garbs are legal. They simply cannot be touched and detected. Under their garbs they are working, they are in key positions in all the key capitals and on the nerve centres which count, manipulating, pulling, suppressing, exploding, creating and forcing issues and policies, mystifying - clarifying and shaping...all only with a single purpose. This time, no chances, no mistakes, no failure." He knew that betrayals were the prime reasons why most of the movements against the British had failed. So he was doubly cautious, he did not trust anybody with all information. He was extremely reticent with information.

Much before publishing of the Gulag Archipelago, this wonderful man had given a vivid description of the labour camps in Siberia (translated) - labours, teachers, scientists, craftsmen, authors all interned - 5000 to 25000 people in these camps, around 49 such camps. All ultra modern things of daily needs are produced there. The pain is unimaginable. Out of the pangs of hunger men eat their own skins. "Keep your back hot by heavy work", no shelter from cold.

He predicted the existence of an underground city in Beijing much before it was known to general public. He vividly described the gory details associated with the cultural revolution of Mao (of rivers of blood, bodies being dumped and transported in trucks and firing continuing through the night) as if he was an eye witness to the macabre scenes.

This great man said much before the CIA report was published, that he had advised Ho Chi Minh to drop cartloads of drugs (cocaine) among US soldiers and make them addicted so that they would lose their ability to fight. He said, "America, the most powerful nation, if, even after fighting for thousand years will not be able to win over North Vietnam." "War is no sentimental business," he had said, "its a cold, calculated affair. No war can be conducted and fought with kid gloves. Modern war esp. takes an appalling toll both in human lives and property. No civilized nation risks it lightly but when it is forced on, it has to be waged in such a manner that makes the opponent wince. This is not done in a vindictive manner but in a cold calculated way to break the opponent's morale, so that he is forced to sue for peace."

But he also has the message of hope for India. "In the inviolable and most Divine name of mother Jagadamba Durga, Bhavani, Chandi, Bengal - India SHALL rise again in her full glory. Corrupt people on my motherland's soil will be completely eliminated gradually. And after a specified period dishonest persons will not have the right to exist on Indian soil. And one, rather, your SAMARITAN shall lead whole world to the fourth

stage of civilization.." He outlined his vision for growth, development, peace and prosperity of India.

Years ago a son of mother Bengal had said, "If Bengal lives who dies? And if Bengal dies...who lives!" To him Bengal was synonymous with greater India and his personal God Sri Sri Durga Kali.

He said (translated from Bengali) " Throughout Asia and even outside what is happening you won't and can't know. Simply put, rice is boiling in a big cauldron. Until the rice is prepared there is utter chaos. Then rice will come out, pure, white, i.e. all things will end well. The offering will begin with Bengal. And after that there are many many..." By Bengal being the first place he meant the liberation of Bengal from Pakistan's clutch. *He predicted about Pakistan that after curving out Bangladesh, disturbances will begin in Baluchistan and Pakhtunistan. Ultimately Pakistan will be, in his language, "khanda..khandah...khandaah" - broken, broken twice and broken into many parts.* He described himself as a born revolutionary, a guerrilla. He said, "a guerrilla is always alert and ready for pouncing." Sometimes his lamentations pertaining to the past are revealing, "I had high hopes, that after crossing Burma, Bengal will rise like a single person. When the English commander was about to surrender, four men betrayed....wheels of fortune turned." He was simply referring to the defeat of INA in Kohima and Imphal. After winning Moirang, INA was about to gain an upper hand when due to lack of food and the monsoon the soldiers had to retreat. Garewal and Prabhudayal had betrayed and went over to the British camp. That turned the battle fortune as British came to know of the pitiable, wretched condition of the INA soldiers and the Japanese.

He made shocking revelations - "After second world war at least 50 wars were fought, America had not been able to win a single of them." "Thingle", he said, imitating Churchill, claiming that he was alive to reveal that little secret that Churchill could not say "S".

He claimed that he helped Dalai Lama to escape to India when he was betrayed by Nehru, as General Shiva or General Death. It is written in Thomas Lowell Junior's book on Dalai Lama says that a certain leader of the Khampa tribes, a General Death or General Shiva, helped the great Lama escape to India from China when Tibet was under siege. And yet Mahakal seemed to be the greatest of the pals of Mao Tse Tung whom he referred to as Tunga Bhadra (with Bengali pronunciation of Mao's last name). He also claimed great camaraderie with Ho Chi Minh whom he referred to as the poet president. He gave hints as to how he helped Vietnam to win against US - "the pride of nine generals and a shadow behind them." The photo of Paris peace conference truly

reveals a shadowy figure behind the Vietnamese delegation, who look every much like what Subhas Bose would have looked in his old age. Nobody could say who the bearded, bespectacled, somber looking person was.

Great wisdom poured from him, "The world turns aside to let any man pass who knows where he is going. The ability to make up your mind inspires self-confidence, it gives you inner power, and it commands the respect of your fellow men." From Upanishads and Gita to Nuclear physics to military strategy to international politics and diplomacy to occult to spirituality and Yoga and Pranayama to para science to history - Mahakal is a vast repository of knowledge. He was in touch with at least two great spiritual figures - Anandamayi Ma and Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath. He had a great devotion for Sri Ramakrishna whom he called as 'Sri Satgurudev'.

He says (translated from Bengali), "India has a mission, a message, for spreading that message India is alive for centuries after centuries... He urges all Indians "to win over their weaknesses and go ahead and lay claim to the greatness, sacrifice for the sake of the divine mother", exactly in the same way one great man had inspired millions of Indians living in East Asia to give up everything and fight for the independence of their motherland.

Mahakal's goal was simple - Reunification of a partitioned India. That was his tapasya, for that tapasya he had to remain hidden, as per his letter to "Lee". He was a spymaster engaged in activities that had far reaching consequences for the geopolitics and hence he had no intention to come out in the open until his goal was achieved. Also he mentioned that his name was in the War Criminal's List and hence if he had come out India would be in trouble as the allied forces would demand his handover.

As per his prophecies, he predicted that India would have to go through a period of Catharsis where shock after shock will be administered to the country over a period of time until it reaches a crescendo. **The red shirts (read the leftists) will enter into a pitched battle with the Nationalists, then the red shirts will fight among themselves and globally the leftist ecosystem will crumble.** And then will come the fulfillment. But India will have to pay a heavy price since India and Indians have forgotten the people who brought freedom to them. After that, will emerge a new India, a glorious India.

"A Tryst with Mahakaal The Ghost Who Never Died" is a fictional novel written by Tilak Dutta on the basis of the above theme.

Media Attention - How People got to Know: Mukherjee Commission's Role

Journalists got to know about Bhagwanji after his supposed death in 1985. Ashok Tandon of Naye Log first published a series of articles in Ganga magazine about a "Gumnnami" baba in Faizabad, whom the locals knew to be Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Syed Kauser Hussein, Nirmal Nibedon and V.N Arora made a series of stories for Northern India Patrika, a publication of the Amrita Bazar group. Lalita Bose, niece of Netaji had come down to Ram Bhavan where Bhagwanji had lived during his last years, and with the help of the journalists and lawyers made an appeal in Allahabad High Court to preserve the properties (mostly books and documents and photos of the Bose family members) belonging to the saint who she thought to be her uncle. Adheer Som in 'Gumnnami Baba a Case History' and Anuj Dhar and Chandrachud Ghosh in Conundrum provide a comprehensive account of Bhagwanji's activities, his antecedents and the people associated with him. It was during the hearings of the Mukherjee Commission, that a lot of information came out about Gumnnami Baba, from both the disciples of Bhagwanji, as well as his other acquaintances, esp. those who had seen the person behind the veil. Some of them had also known Netaji - like Shrikant Sharma Kanha. However the DNA test done on the teeth that were assumed to be of Bhagwanji's, did not match with the DNA samples from Netaji's family on the mother's side, as per the official report. That said, there were a lot of documentary and oral evidences in favour of Bhagwanji being Netaji Subhas Bose, which cannot be outright ignored.

Anuj Dhar of Mission Netaji has taken the help of at least two well known handwriting experts - Curt Baggett and Ashok Kashyap, who have testified publicly that the letters of Bhagwanji and that of Netaji are written by the same person and that there is no chance of any forgery. A similar opinion was expressed by noted handwriting expert B Lal Kapoor in Mukherjee Commission, who had produced a detail report in support of his conclusion. But two Government experts denied any such match and hence Mukherjee Commission could not come to a definite conclusion in this matter. Anuj Dhar and Chandrachud Ghosh have discussed the issue in great length in their book Conundrum, to explain why the Government forensic opinions differed from that of the private experts and why they should be rejected.

Justice Mukherjee, in an offline conversation with director Amlan Kusum Ghosh, in 2010, had made a comment that he was one hundred percent sure that Bhagwanji was Netaji. The comment, though off the record, was unintentionally captured in a video.

Of all the three possibilities regarding Netaji, the possibility of his being metamorphosed as Bhagwanji, appears stronger owing to the above considerations. However majority of the Bose family members, have strongly rejected the possibility. The Government of India has also not declassified the confidential IB files that would have thrown more light on this issue, and its official position, that Netaji died in a plane crash in 1945, remains same. Other detractors and rival researchers like Dr. Purabi Roy have claimed that Bhagwanji was a dummy planted by the Indian Government to cover the fact that Netaji was killed in Russia.

Bhagwanji apparently died or disappeared on September 16, 1985. A body was cremated in Guptar Ghat in presence of 13 disciples on September 18. While some of the researchers like Anuj Dhar assert that this is the actual death of Netaji, based on evidences of the witnesses who were present, there are others who believe that he had enacted another disappearance, to reappear when his country needs him.

Recently the Government of U.P has transferred the belongings of Bhagwanji or Gumnnami Baba to the Ram Katha Sangrahalaya, based on the judgement given by Allahabad High court to set up a museum to preserve them.

Sahai Commission, which was constituted by the U.P Government of Akhilesh Yadav, to find who Gumnnami Baba was, headed by Justice Vishnu Sahai, had submitted its report to the Government of UP, which was tabled in the UP Assembly in December 2019. Vishnu Sahai has reached the conclusion that Bhagwanji was not Netaji, but a disciple of Netaji. However he has failed to ascertain who that disciple was. Also to bolster his arguments Justice Sahai took the help of a letter from a young teenager called Bulbul, who had requested Bhagwanji to visit her home on Netaji's birthday. But Justice Sahai did not make any attempt to find out who Bulbul was. Bulbul was later identified to be the daughter of Santosh Bhattacharya or Tosh, a long time Bhagwanji associate. Bulbul or Suhita Bhattacharya, has come up with a disclaimer saying that she had written that letter as a teenager because her father told her to do so and her father Santosh Bhattacharya believed that Bhagwanji was Netaji. Since Justice Sahai has not been able to establish the identity of Gumnnami Baba, his findings are not very relevant to the case and the Gumnnami mystery still lingers on in the official papers. Justice Sahai's conclusions that Gumnnami Baba was not Netaji is based on the DNA test result and Mukherjee Commission's report and hence he had rejected most of the oral and documentary evidences that support the hypothesis that Gumnnami Baba was Netaji.

Recently RTI Activist Sayak Sen has unearthed an important information. In response to the RTI filed by him the CFSL Kolkata, one of the organizations to have conducted the DNA test on Bhagwanji's teeth and declared the results to be negative, has stated that the electropherogram which is a must for DNA results to be interpreted, is not available, thus putting up a question mark on the quality and integrity of the DNA test conducted. After an uproar by the media the agency got back saying that the report is available but cannot be shared, thus raising even more questions on the integrity. There have been serious allegations on the quality of the report by a renowned forensic expert of Banaras Hindu University Gyaneshwar Chobey, on media.

Mahakal on himself and Subhas Chandra Bose

1. On Benimadhab Das

Master mohashoy had the most influence on me. He changed the course of life. Concentration of mind, nature study and absorbing strength from the love of nature was all taught by him

— Benimadhab Das was the teacher of Subhas Chandra Bose in his younger days who taught him the love for nature

2. On His Autobiography

Somebody had asked him to write a biography. Mahakal said that earlier he had written one but that remained incomplete. Now he no longer has the same frame of mind. He has undergone a complete metamorphosis and his life now is an open leaf for everyone. Therefore he need not have a biography.

— Netaji had written his autobiography "An Indian Pilgrim" which remained unfinished

3. On Hemanto Sarkar

Mahakal mentioned to Charan in the course of his reminiscences that Hemanto was his bosom friend

— Hemanto Sarkar was indeed the bosom friend of Subhas Chandra Bose from his school days

4. On Khosla Commission's Motives

Mahakal told his followers when the Khosla Commission was still in progress that it is required to establish that the death in air crash is a concoction. Whether he (Mahakal/Bose) is there or not is redundant. Mahakal said, "Let the matter remain that the plane crash is a concoction."

— It is widely propagated officially that Netaji died in a plane crash in 1945 and Khosla commission upheld that. Mahakal later said that 'Khosla's pen is Indira's pen'

5. On his parents & Lineage

For so long you have known me to be the son of a Rai Bahadur, a mother. Then you knew that by the magic wand of Deshbandhu he joined politics against his own will. Then he went to the foreign lands, became Supreme Commander, and then died or disappeared. Now you know that he is alive.

— Subhas Bose's father was Rai Bahadur Janaki Nath Bose and he came to the politics under the spell of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. He became the Supreme Commander of the Azad Hind Army and was last seen on 17 Aug 1945

6. On Mahatma Gandhi

Mahakal mentioned, "I had high hopes that after crossing Burma, Bengal will rise like a single person - to a man. The British commander, wrote down the surrender proposal of the staff command and was about to sign and seal the envelop, four people entered there. So order went to the front that 'do not surrender, their condition is unenviable, pitiable.' The wheel of fortune overturned.

— INA had crossed Burma and entered Kohima and went up to Bishenpur sector in Imphal. They also crossed Arakan and went up to Cox Bazar. Subhas's goal was that INA would be able to rouse the Bengal revolutionaries to action, but none of the revolutionaries responded, mainly owing to misinformation campaigns

7. On Renunciation

In College and University years I used to seek out, hunt out the so called - great seers and wise men of our days and questioned - questioned - questioned them on mysticism. None satisfied me. I even left everything (once) in search of true mystic sat guru and searched far and wide in the country and high and low in the Himalayas. None could satisfy me.

— An Indian Pilgrim narrates Subhas's quest for a Guru. He left his home in search of mysticism and roamed far and wide, even went to the Himalayas in search of spirituality, but was disappointed

8. On Mahatma Gandhi

Dead Man has no rancour for Bapu because Bapu got twice defeated in his fight against him and was so rattled that he gave up his Congress membership and also started a whispering campaign (against your Dead Man). Bapu at last turned a volte face and preached fighting for freedom and honour...by the radio exhortations of your Dead Man. Your Dead Man went with Bapu's full blessings.

— In 1939 during and after Tripuri Congress Gandhi played a con cooperation with Subhas. But after Subhas left India and started his radio exhortations from Berlin, Gandhiji had declared 'Quit India" and "Do or Die"

9. Prof. Oaten incident in Presidency

The incident had occurred in between (my) entry into and exit from the Library. In the darkness of night the most revered (a lady) narrated the incident and requested "Su..must save (somebody - her son)". This was the ideal (of saving as per request). My mouth was shut as a result and nobody could open it...Sir Ashutosh tried his best. But the voice was echoing in my mind, 'save my son. 'I had read in Mahabharata, when the truth will harm somebody, keep quiet. So I kept quiet

— Subhas had no role in the Oaten incident. However he kept quiet and never revealed as to who actually pushed Prof. Oaten. He was dismissed from Presidency and lost more than a year, but never budged

10. Leela Roy's impression

Three persons came some time back. One of them had been introduced to me by Deshbandhu himself in his drawing room when I returned after quitting ICS. (Lee) said, "Your style of speaking is not changed a bit..those who have got your company - they can make no mistake...Your Bengali dialect is exactly intact. That little stammer - those words...remain as it is. Everybody would have identified you in Bengal, even if you had stayed behind seven walls."

— Lee or Leela Roy was a long time companion of Netaji. She knew Subhas Chandra Bose intimately since 1922. She met Bhagwanji or Mahakal in 1962 in Neemsar and told the above to him - The style is the man himself.

11. On Adjutant Habibur Rahman

My Adjutant was a complete man. Perhaps that was why he did not get a refuge in free India. I have never known of anybody who have ever obeyed order with so much unshakable dedication

— Habibur Rahman, the adjutant of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who had accompanied him on his last journey, had never deviated from his story that Netaji died in plane crash

Controversies and Legacy

Death

When we discuss about the possible death or disappearance of Subhas Chandra Bose, there are three paths. In Path 1 there is no complication. The people following path 1 generally accept the Subhas died in the plane crash on 18 August 1945. These people include majority of the family members of Netaji, Indian Government and politicians and intellectuals and academia including eminent historians. The people following path 2 believe that the air crash was concocted and Netaji, under the guise of it, he escaped to Russia, was tortured by Stalin there, and died in a Russian prison or Gulag. The people believing this include Prof. Purabi Roy whose subject of research pertained to this theory, Major General G.D Bakshi, Subramanyam Swami etc. Even though there are few documentary and oral evidences that Subhas went to Russia (like the story of Ardhendu Sarkar), there is no proof that he died there. The path 3 is where a hermit returned from Russia to India via China, Tibet and Nepal, as a mendicant - Pathik Faqir or Bhagwanji or whom the media calls as Gumnami Baba and who calls himself as the Mahakal, dead ghost, Mendicus, and "S". This theory has a lot of oral and documentary evidence in support of it. The forensic evidence also goes in favour because of the Handwriting match by three eminent handwriting experts who had ruled out any possibility of forgery. The DNA test result, which hitherto has been a major stumbling block, is now under scanner because of the RTI revelation that there is no electropherogram report available to back up the claim of the Government forensic Lab

in Kolkata, giving credence to the suspicion of a DNA fraud as alleged by Anuj Dhar and Chandrachud Ghosh in Conundrum.

In a nutshell therefore Bhagwanji theory appears strongest but there is also a catch. While oral testimonies of witnesses point to the death of Bhagwanji on 16 Sep, 1985, his disciples based out of Kolkata and researchers like Dr. Jayanta Choudhuri and Dr. Madhusudan Pal believe that this event was another disappearance act. Dr. R.P Mishra, his physician and one of the chief witnesses of the last day, was mysteriously quiet about the death. Since this subject is linked to emotions and is inconclusive, we therefore just present the hypotheses and let the readers draw their own conclusions and recommend them to read the researchers' works.

Marriage

It is generally accepted that Netaji was married secretly to Emilie Schenkl and their daughter is Dr. Anita Pfuff. There is a collection of letters of Subhas Chandra Bose to Emilie Schenkl, published by Netaji Research Bureau. Netaji, while leaving Germany, apparently left a letter in Bengali addressed to Sarat Bose where he had requested him to take care of his wife and daughter in case anything untoward happened to him. There are however controversies regarding the date of marriage. Prof. Sugato Bose has fixed the marriage date as 26th December, 1937. Leonard Gordon in Brothers Against the Raj has put the marriage year as 1941. In a case against Jayasree Publications, Dr. Sisir Kumar Bose, in his affidavit, had put Netaji's marriage year as (Jan) 1942. Rudolf Hartog in his book has stated that he had taken an interview of Emilie in which she mentioned that they were married as per Hindu rituals. Dr. Jayanta Choudhuri, Dr. Madhusudan Pal, and several other disciples of Bhagwanji categorically deny that Netaji was ever married. The way in which the Bose family learnt about the marriage is also subjected to controversies. Sarat Bose's daughter Roma stated that Emilie had handed over the letter written by Netaji in Bengali to his Mejda in Vienna Airport during his Europe trip of 1949. Roma's sister Geeta had claimed that the letter arrived by post to the Elgin road residence. In another version, Dr. Sisir Bose claimed that the letter was found in a cigar box. (source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Cry-to-unravel-Emilie-Schenkl-mystery/articleshow/50538887.cms>)

It is argued that Netaji wanted to keep his marriage a private affair and did not disclose it to the world at large in order to protect his family. It is also stated that because Nazi Germany discouraged any marriage between a pure blood Aryan with a non German, the marriage was never registered. Therefore there are no documents or witnesses pertaining to the marriage.

It is to be noted that Bhagwanji vehemently denied his own marriage, even refusing to discuss the topic. Researcher & writer Anuj Dhar and Chandrachud Ghosh in Conundrum, and Adheer Som in Gumnami Baba: A case History, who have advocated path 3, have argued that this was because Bhagwanji was trying to protect his wife and daughter. The question naturally arises as to protect from whom? It was already generally accepted that they were Netaji's family members. Also the discussion was with Bhagwanji's followers who were committed to secrecy about him. So why should there be a denial at all?

Even more intriguing is the fact that he was scathing about them, referring to them as *Uron Pari* (flying fairy – literally, a derogatory term) and *Parizadi* – daughter of the Pari – again, used in a derogatory way, while discussing what would happen if the Shaulmari Sadhu was widely recognized as Netaji. One normally does not refer to their wife and daughter in these terms. So either he was not Netaji, or he was not married, or he had genuinely forgotten about his marriage. Also his second statement was significant, that the letter was a forgery. He was referring to the letter addressed to Sarat Bose which Emilie sent to Sarat/handed over to him – saying, he used to write letters to his brothers only in English, he used to put a *mangalik* (an auspicious symbol) on the letter and used to write the address on top, not at the bottom. It only meant that he had read all the details about the case and yet he had referred to the subject as "dirty" topic, not worth discussion. Bhagwanji further said that "if somebody is responsible for a crucial, hazardous work, that person cannot indulge in romantic relationships. Else he would be completely ruined. If there is any secret work, any hazardous work, only one person needs to be involved, if there are two persons (man and wife) that work will never get done." (translated from the original Bengali in Oi Mahamanab Ase).

Surajit Dasgupta, one of the disciples, had filed a PIL in Calcutta High Court to discredit Netaji's marriage, by using the same arguments as Bhagwanji, viz. 1) the original letter was not found and only an English translation is available, photocopy printed elsewhere did not match that of Netaji's handwriting, letter did not mention who he had married, where and how, there were questions on how it reached Sarat Bose etc. 2) the letter was a forgery (arguing along the same line as that of Bhagwanji's contention)

To summarize:

Path 1 – Very few who believe in path 1 of Netaji's death in 1945 air crash, have any doubt about his marriage

Path 2 – In accepting that Netaji died in Russia, there is no problem in accepting that he was married

Path 3 – There is a serious problem owing to the categorical denial of Bhagwanji and his claim that the letter, which is the only proof, was a forgery, and his derogatory references to the ladies in question

A sannyasi denies past life but does not deny facts associated with past life. A husband may, out of concern for the safety and security, deny marriage, but does not call it a “dirty affair” or use derogatory terms about the near and dear ones, or even bolster his argument by claiming that the letter was a forgery. His disciples were anyway sworn to secrecy. Bhagwanji argued, most reasonably, as to which sensible person would leave his wife and infant daughter to jump into the fire, leaving them in the lurch, and how was it possible that the Lady concerned accepted it without protest. Three statements are significant – 1) That any discussion about the marriage is a “Dirty” Topic 2) The letter that is the sole proof of the marriage is claimed forcefully to be false 3) He uses disparaging terms about his so called wife and daughter, thus completely disowning them.

Almost everything that have been written or said so far about Netaji's marriage, are on the basis of the original claim made from a section of the family. His statement to the Tokyo cadet that "I have no sons of my own, you are my sons", can also be interpreted both ways – either he was referring to a fact that he had no son but a daughter, or he was referring to having no son in a broader sense , i.e. he had no child of his own. His statement to Dr. Ba Maw, if the claim of the latter is right, is also significant. Dr. Ba Maw said, “I often have my mystical moments”, Bose once told me, “when I would like to give up everything and spend my life in prayer and meditation. But I must wait till India is liberated.” Again, when someone laughingly asked him when he intended to get married, he laughed back and replied, “As soon as India is free.” Why would Netaji deliberately lie here? He should have simply requested Dr. Ba Maw to keep it a secret.

There is merit in the claim when it is said that Netaji would still be venerated in public had he declared his marriage and therefore he had no reason to be secretive. Rashbehari Bose was married to a Japanese lady Toshiko Soma. In Indian culture it is forbidden only for the sannyasis and brahmacharis to marry, Netaji was neither. He wanted to be celibate, one can become so even after marriage and after having children. Sri Ramakrishna was married and so were many other saints and sages revered by the people. In India everybody took it for granted that householders marry and they knew that Netaji was not a sannyasi. Netaji knew much more about Indian culture and people than the researchers who make such claims. Also he would not have kept quiet for fear of popular backlash, that simply does not gel with his

character. He never compromised with the truth for personal benefit. Indians do not have any problem with foreign ladies who loved India – like Sister Nivedita, Annie Besant, Nellie Sengupta who was wife of Netaji's arch rival J.M Sengupta, were all foreigners who were held with respect. There is also merit in the argument that Netaji did not reveal his marriage to keep his wife and daughter safe as Nazi Germany would not like a pure blood German marrying an Asian, and also to protect them from the British intelligence, and that's why he never tried to contact them. But why would he continue to do so after Germany was free of Nazism?

Unless we accept the premise that Netaji was metamorphosed into Bhagwanji, his marriage is not a controversy. The moment we accept that Netaji was Bhagwanji, by his own statement his marriage becomes a big question mark.

INA Treasure

Prof. Kapil Kumar, Director of the INA Museum in Red Fort in New Delhi, has shared his valuable insights into the issue of the alleged INA treasure loot. He sees a larger conspiracy behind Netaji mystery, centered around the pilferage of INA treasure by the interested parties.

in Oi Mahamanab Ase, the great man narrates a sordid tale of betrayal and plunder. "At the time of British American reoccupation, Governor of Azad Hind Bank at Taungyi, Shan state, Yellappa, as asked, secretly packed all assets in boxes and brought to Loika. One spy informed (to the British) and they were captured. Yellappa died of bombing. Captain Lakshmi, Lt. Gojendra Singh were arrested. Col. Bhagat was interned there before by Azad Hind Govt. at Taungyi also arrested, other soldiers, bank Officers captured. Major Yusuf Ali of British Army was in charge. Gopal Singh, collector of Netaji Fund, was in possession of Rs 4 crores. Escaped to Siam."

The great man continues to claim that, "Indian Independence League became meddled with British spies and traitors. Chandramall and his friends Golam Ahmed, Taru Khan all of British intelligence service - all joined IIL, Tokyo. Ramamurthy, General Araki, Col. Figgis, all traitors and they were working under Col. Wilson of the British Army. Golam Ahmed and Taru Khan were employed in the Finance Dept. General Chatterjee (Finance Minister) was fooled by Ananda Mohan Sahay, secy. of the Azad Hind Govt. Golam Ahmed and Taru Khan were friends of A.M Sahay, Ramamurthy. A.M Sahay and Minister Ayer were close friends. All traitors and they were friendly with Imperial Jap. HQ and with British Intelligence at Tokyo."

He continues, "Minister Ayer was to follow the bomber with treasure. But he went to Tokyo and handed over the treasure to Ramamurthy. Disposed of some, encashed part of the jewels, with the help of British Military of Tokyo and Jap foreign officials. J.N knows it. Murthi gave "J" only a small fraction of the fabulous wealth. No treasure was burnt. It is a fabrication. Imperial Jap Army, British men, India Govt. and party men all involved. That is why no action taken."

As per the MEA File No 25/4/NGO - Vol 1, the INA treasure that was deposited to the Embassy of Tokyo and which was sent to India with Mr. Damle, Jt. Secy, Food and Agriculture, contained broken pieces of jewelry and other articles worth Rs 90,000 only. The Government had sought waiver of customs duty on these articles and Prime Minister Nehru himself referred the matter to the Finance Ministry. The treasure, as per Nehru's letter, consisted of some gold. A letter of Lailamani Naidu in 1952 accuses Mr. Ayer of dividing the loot and handing over a small quantity to the Government. Ramamurthy had handed over around 20,000 Yen in cash to the Indian Embassy, apart from the Rs 90,00 worth of broken jewelry.

As per MEA File no 25/15/NGO-53, V.B Sheth, former Secretary of Indian Independence League in Tokyo, had alleged that "Ramamurthy, took the jewels and precious articles belonging to INA, in three boxes, from S.A. Ayer, and disposed of the valuables in Japan. He then became a multi millionaire and ran a very prosperous business. In Tokyo he was accused of evading customs duty to the tune of 2 million yens. Ayer just took a blank receipt from Ramamurthy, after handing him the treasures. Ramamurthy disposed of the treasures by converting them to cash and colluded in this effort with the British Intelligence officers in the British military mission. Between 1946 and 1948, i.e. after receiving the treasure, Ramamurthy suddenly became very rich, and he was accused to run a black market in Tokyo in the garb of being a trader." The letter was dated 18th February, 1953 and was addressed to the Home Minister of India Government. V.B Sheth was also the director of Indo Japanese Friendship Association. Sheth also implicated Japanese military chiefs. A.M Nair, who was the liaison officer of IIL, said that the jewels did not accompany Bose as the plane was overloaded. Ayer followed in the next plane with the boxes and after reaching Tokyo when he heard of Netaji's death in a plane crash, he handed them over to Ramamurthy. Murthy since left Japan for India under mysterious circumstances. The jewels estimated at million dollars were never accounted for. Murthi had refused to make any accounting of the funds of IIL Japan, according to L.R Miglani. Murthi and his wife were arrested by Japanese police for violation of customs law.

On May 21, 1951, Tokyo Mission Head KK Chettur wrote to B.N Chakravarty on his suspicions about Ayer and Ramamurthy regarding misappropriation of INA wealth. Col. Figges of British Intelligence had invited Ramamurthy to settle down in UK, pointing to a tacit understanding between the two. Ayer was later appointed by Nehru as a key adviser for the publicity of his Five Year plans.

Dinanath, chairman of the Azad Hind Bank, on being interrogated by British intelligence soon after the war, revealed that Netaji left Rangoon with 63.5 kg of gold. An 18-page secret note, prepared for the Morarji Desai government in 1978, quotes Netaji's personal valet Kundan Singh as saying that the treasure was in "four steel cases". (source: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/north/story/netaji-files-subhas-chandra-bose-ina-treasure-jawaharlal-nehru-252969-2015-05-15>).

Ashes in the Renkoji Temple and DNA Test

There had been frequent attempts by Government of India to bring back the ashes kept in the Renkoji temple. However none of the attempts succeeded in the face of staunch opposition, despite many correspondences between the Governments of India and Japan and requests from the Renkoji temple priests. In 1992, Netaji was conferred with the award of Bharat Ratna "posthumously" by the Government of India which led to a hue and cry. External Affairs Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherjee had sought the permission of Emilie Schenkl to bring back the ashes in 1993, but she refused to comply with the Government's request. In 2003 Mukherjee Commission had explored various options of conducting a DNA test on the ashes kept in Renkoji temple. The experts in India (Dr. Lalji Singh of CCMB) and abroad had opined that there was practically no chance of extracting high quality DNA from the burnt bones that were subjected to a high temperature. Justice Mukherjee Commission report contains the details regarding the correspondences with experts on this matter. So there seems to be no way of testing the bone remnants and concluding with certainty if they belonged to Subhas Chandra Bose with the present day technology. Prime Ministers and political leaders like A.B Vajpayee and Indira Gandhi had payed tribute to the ashes kept in Renkoji Temple while others had avoided the same.

As per the book of Narayan Sanyal – “*Netaji Rahasya Sandhane*” - when he had met the chief priest of the Renkoji temple and his friends, the chief priest told him that when Nehru had visited the temple, he did not pay any homage to the ashes. Even when he was requested to burn an incense stick and was given one, he was irritated and after hastily sticking the incense stick to a corner of the table, he came out of the temple. In the visitor book he wrote a homage to Buddha - seeking that Buddha's message should

become the cornerstone of a peaceful world, but he did not mention Netaji anywhere. His daughter Indira did the same when she came for an official visit to the temple. In the visitor's book she paid homage to Buddha, not to Netaji.

These points to only one fact - both of Indira and Nehru knew that the ashes do not belong to Netaji. Both of them knew that Netaji was alive and none of them, neither the father nor the daughter, had any respect for Netaji in their minds.

There are occasional demands to bring back the ashes to India in the political and bureaucratic circles but this could not be done in the face of strong opposition by those who think that the ashes did not belong to Netaji. Among those who seek Government help to bring back the ashes include Dr. Anita Pfuff and the Bose family members like Prof. Sugato Bose. Since 2003 there has been no further attempts to conduct any DNA test on the ashes kept in the Renkoji temple.

Bose as a Nazi collaborator

There was a raging debate in American media over the Chief of Staff of American Democrat Rep Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Saikat Chakrabarty, wearing a T shirt that had Subhas Chandra Bose's picture. AoC's opponents had accused Saikat of worshiping and supporting a Nazi collaborator as Bose is known to be in the Western academic and intellectual world. While Bhulabhai Deshai in his spirited defence for INA soldiers had given a fitting reply to the British charges against Subhas Chandra Bose and INA, it is worthwhile to mention the notes of Girija Mukherjee who had been alongside Bose in Germany. Writes Girija, "Germany and Japan happened to be the only two countries with which England was at war, was it not natural that an Indian nationalist opposed to British rule, should try to secure their help against England? Netaji did so, as a National Revolutionary just as before him. Garibaldi, took help from the enemies of Austria to free and unify Italy, or Sun-Yat-Sen did from Japan to destroy the imperial Dynasty in China or, for that matter, De-Valera and the Sinn Finns took aid from America to make Ireland free. One can give many examples in history, speak of the example of the help which the Western Powers sought and got from the Soviet Union to fight Nazi Germany although immediately after the war they regretted it and quarreled with the Soviet Union. All this proves that it is possible and can be considered moral to cooperate with an unpopular regime for specific national purposes, without being involved in the ideology of such a regime or in its internal political methods, however obnoxious they are. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939, which sparked off the war, was signed by the Soviet Union with a Fascist Power, in order, as the Soviet Government thought at time to safeguard the national interests of Russia; and the Allies

went into war to defend a country, namely Poland, which had a dictatorial regime, also because, by doing so, they thought they were safeguarding their national interests. Greece of Metaxas, for whose defence so many young Englishmen gave up their lives, was also a Fascist country. The diplomatic history of the Great Powers is replete with examples of changing sides whenever the political exigencies demanded them, and, was it not a British Foreign Minister who said that England had neither eternal friends nor eternal enemies but she has only her national and imperial interests to defend? If such a political maxim was good for England, why should it be bad for India?"

To these, it may be added, Nazis were an evil cult no doubt, but can the Americans under Harry Truman and General MacArthur, who deliberately murdered almost two hundred thousand Japanese citizens by dropping their end product of billions of dollars of investment in Manhattan project over a country that had almost got ruined, be deemed as paragons of virtue? Can the British, who deliberately, according to Churchill's secret war by historian Madhusree Mukherjee, starved to death some 3-4 million Bengalis, by denying them food, claim any sainthood? Aren't the British (and by supporting them the Americans) guilty of the same crime as that of the Nazis? Only difference is that the Allied forces won the war and the Nazis lost it. But weren't they of the same disposition, same crime? These pertinent questions were raised by an intrepid Indian Judge Radha Binod Pal, during the war criminal trial of the captured Japanese generals. he was the lone dissenter among the judges who had made up their mind in punishing the Japanese generals for their audacity to attack the White men's empire across Asia. Accusations of excesses in China and other places were just ruse. At least the February 10 incident of the B29 bomber dropping incendiary bombs on a hospital in Burma proved that the Americans were no less proficient in war crimes. And their subsequent exploits in Korea, Vietnam and Middle East proved it again and again. Only there was no international court of law to try them. There was no international court of law to put to trial Yahiya Khan, the butcher of Dhaka, who sent 3 million Bengalis to death and gave a freedom pass to his soldiers to rape hundreds of thousands of hapless Bengali, mostly Hindu, women, and his mentor Bhutto. Pakistan was (until recently, till Bin Laden was discovered from a hideout) one of the trusted allies of America.

Continues Girija Mukherjee, "Was it wrong for General de Gaulle to take Anglo-American help to liberate France? Were not Subhas Bose's tactics and motives comparable to those of General de Gaulle? Were not his motives, his conscience, as clear as those of General de Gaulle and of the men who rescued France from the humiliation of remaining an occupied country?" He rueful the fact that, Millions of people in our country who look upon Netaji Subhas Bose as one of the greatest heroes of our

fight for freedom, will be shocked to know that both in Western and Eastern Europe, he is referred to as a Fascist, a Quisling and a Hitlerite stooge. In Germany, where Subhas Bose laid the foundation of INA between 1941 and 1943, his name is a taboo. Very seldom any mention of him is made in newspapers, and when mentioned at all, he is described as a Nazi." He continues, "This applies also to other Western European countries. In spite of a very handsome tribute paid to him by an inimical Englishman, Hugh Toye, in *The Springing Tiger*, people in many countries still go on referring to him as a Quisling, and when mild, as a Bengali revolutionary."

Girija Mukherjee rightly points out that "Subhas Bose, who imbibed in his youth the ideas of Tagore, Aurobindo, Vivekananda and Gandhi, was a profound humanist in the Hindu sense of the term as revealed in his letters written in Bengali, published in the book *Patravali*. These letters are eloquent testimonies of his deeply ingrained sense of liberalism and love of liberty." Bose was an ardent follower of Vivekananda. great scholars like Shankari Prasad Basu, one of the foremost experts on Vivekananda, thinks that Subhas Chandra Bose was the rightful heir of Vivekananda's love for India and its people. There was no hatred in Subhas's ideology. He was a Kshatriya, war to him was a righteous battle against unrighteousness of a tyrannical and oppressive foreign rule. Didn't Mahabharat teach us that when ends are unselfish and noble, means don't matter?

Subhas himself writes: "When I first visited Germany in 1933, I had hopes that the new German nation which had risen to a consciousness of its national strength and self-respect would instinctively feel a deep sympathy for other nations struggling in the same direction. Today, I regret that I have to return to India with the conviction that the new nationalism of Germany is not only narrow and selfish but arrogant." Referring to a speech made by Hitler, Bose writes:

"Herr Hitler has talked of the destiny of the white races to rule over the rest of the world. But the historical fact is, that up till now the Asiatics have dominated Europe more than have the Europeans dominated Asia ... We who are struggling for our own freedom desire that all nations should be free and that Europe and Asia should be at peace with one another. It, therefore, pains us that the new nationalism in Germany is inspired by selfishness and racial arrogance".

In Germany his main supporter was Adam von Trott zu Solz, who, belonged to the Kreisau circle that had in 1944 plotted the assassination of Hitler. Neither Subhas Bose, nor the Indian Legion, had any direct connect with the Nazi top brass. Every matter was

handled through the foreign office of von Trott. That itself absolves him from any charges of being a collaborator. Nazis helped him out of their own selfish interest. But this was one man whom they could not manipulate, who would not yield to them, who had a forceful personality whom they had to respect and perhaps fear. After all, who can intimidate a person who has conquered the fear of death?

Writes Girija Mukherjee, "These extracts from one of the many letters of this kind on world problems prove, if proofs are necessary, that Netaji was not only not sympathetic to national socialism, but he was opposed to it from its very inception. If still he wanted to seek German aid, it was because, first, Germany was at war with 'India's enemy', and, secondly, because—as he writes in the same letter—"according to our past experience the Germans were a very warmhearted people, particularly friendly to Indians" and finally because his plan of going to the Soviet Union had failed."

Wasn't he the only person in Hitler's Germany to stand face to face to Hitler and call out his bluff on India? Would a collaborator have dared to do the same anywhere in the world?

He said on May 1, 1942:

"I am not an apologist of the three powers and it is not my task to defend what they have done or may do in future. That is a task which devolves on these nations themselves. My concern is, however, with India, and if I may add further, with India alone."

Subhas Chandra and the Left Wing Right Wing Politics

Even though Subhas called himself as Leftist and Socialist and was enamored by Soviet Russia like so many youngsters of his day by the revolutionary spirit, he was not a communist. He wanted to find the synthesis of a best political idea that would be rooted in India, in its traditions. He was deeply spiritual and was as much socialist as Swami Vivekananda was, viz. humanist who could sincerely feel for the oppressed, for the poor and deprived, for the labour and the masses who toiled hard to earn their living and lived on pittance. His concern for the people was not political as was the case with the communists. His concern stemmed from genuine love for them, just like his guru Vivekananda's. So to dub him as a Leftist or Communist would be a dangerous aberration bordering on folly. Similarly he was averse to the communal politics. He did not partner with the Muslim League or denounced the politics of Hindu Mahasabha or changed Jana Gana Mana to Subh Sukh Chain or inducted a large number of Muslim officers in Azad Hind to appease the Muslims as some of the Right Wingers would want

to believe. He inherited his love for people cutting across communities from his Guru Deshbandhu and from the legacy of Ramakrishna Vivekananda. His temporary partnership with Muslim League was a tactical move, to counter the British politics of Divide and Rule and Congress's foolishness to give in to it. He also admired the Nationalist Muslims who were no less patriotic, in his opinion, than Nationalist Hindus. His agitation against Holwell monument, Siraj ud Daulah puja and other activities should be seen in the light of these tactical maneuvers whereby he made a last ditch attempt for the Muslim youth to give up the idea of two nation theory and join the mainstream politics. He knew that Congress and British would not hesitate for a divide of Bengal as that would suit the agenda for both – a weak and communally divided Bengal would have meant less supporters for carrying out anti British activities and a smaller support base for Subhas. He had to keep Bengal united because he foresaw the horrors that partition would have unfolded – it would have brought ruins for the people and economy of Bengal.

It is to be noted that Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in the initial stages had sought to govern a unified Bengal through a tactical alliance with the Krishak Praja Party of Fazlul Haq. His plan was largely sabotaged by the British in the wake of the Quit India Movement. Subhas met both Savarkar and Jinnah separately in 1940 in an attempt to forge an understanding. Had he been truly partisan, he would have met Jinnah but not Savarkar. According to Uma Mukerjee (The two Revolutionaries), Rashbehari Bose was in touch with Savarkar and both shared the vision of raising an army from among the Indian soldiers. Savarkar had plans of sending Hindu Nationalist youth to the British army so that they learnt to fight and rebel against the British at appropriate time. Netaji was critical of Hindu Mahasabha because of the latter's refusal to join the mainstream national movement against the British. However he had praised Savarkar's dedication in his speech from Azad Hind radio in 1944. He also praised Hindu Mahasabha's staunch opposition to the Wavell plan in his speech on 19th June, 1945. To him the British was always the first enemy, not the Muslims, nor the Hindus. Hindu Muslim question could be settled later once British were ousted as they were the mischief mongers who fueled division and antagonism that had been latent. He was a bitter critic of the League and its communal politics in his speeches and addresses. The same is revealed by Ehsan Qadir, an initial supporter of the IIL who later turned out to be against INA. Qadir despised Subhas because he was critical of Muslim League. Subhas had to ward off dangerous partisans like Iqbal Shidai, a staunch League supporter who was in the race to form a Legion with Italian support. The Muslim officers who were under him were mostly as loyal to him as the Hindus – his close confidantes Abid Hasan who accompanied him or Habibur Rahman, who was the only person holding the key to the

secret behind his alleged death or disappearance. RW is quick to point out that some of those officers like Shaukat Malik, Kiani or Habibur himself, joined Pakistan later. But a great man, years later revealed in *Oi Mahamanab Ase – The adjutant (Habibur Rahman)* was a perfect man, he stood his ground till the end. Probably because he was so near perfect that he did not have a place in the independent India under Congress Right Wingers, the Gandhian wing that hated Subhas intensely. Also historical records reveal that how shabbily the INA men and officers who were believed to be close to Subhas, were treated under Nehru. He bought some of them by offering lucrative posts and others were left in the lurch. Had Hindu Mahasabha played a bigger and better role in the Nationalistic Movement post 1942 and had it come out openly in support for INA as Muslim League did for its Muslim officers under trial, it would not have to undergo the ignominy of a decisive defeat in the 1946 elections and Congress could not have gained an upper hand so easily. Subhas was a unifying agent, not a divider, nor an appeaser.

As to the minor points like changing Jana Gana Mana to Subh Sukh Chain, Jana Gana Mana was adopted for the first time for the Indian Legion. For Azad Hind he just wanted to keep the spirit and make the song acceptable to all the communities in line with his vision of Hindustani being the preferred mode of communication. It is to be noted that RW had a problem with Jana Gana Mana also, a section of them had questioned the intention of Rabindranath in penning it, that it was a eulogy written to commemorate the visit of the king George V, while in reality Motilal Nehru adopted the first five stanzas of the poem originally written by Rabindranath as a tribute to the Nation's spirit and its undaunted journey since Time immemorial being governed by a divine power and witness to its innumerable rise and falls. It is to be also noted that the same section of the RW had not even spared Swami Vivekananda. Shankari Prasad Basu writes in *Bibekanando O Somokalin Bharatbarsho*, volume 3 as to how the conservative orthodox Hindus and their mouthpieces like Bangobasi, had attacked Vivekananda relentlessly, questioned the right of a Shudra to become a sannyasi and even raised objections to his food habits like eating meat and his association with the so called Mlecchas. One of their representatives had even remarked after Vivekananda's death that had there been a Hindu rule in the country he (Vivekananda) would be sent to the gallows for supposedly bringing disgrace upon his own people (Shankar – Aschoryo Bibekananda). So RW or LW or Centrists, have no right to usurp either Subhas or Vivekananda. These great souls had a class of their own. They stood for the entire humanity, not for any particular dogma, nor for any vested interest group. **In the words of Kaka Kelkar, as narrated by Vishwas Patil in his "Mahanayak", Subhas neither**

belonged to the left, nor to the right, he was only "upright". To that if we may add that he was merely "Righteous".

And Left Wing has no right either to gloat. We all remember the despicable role that Communist party played in the Subhas saga by sabotaging his activities, by dubbing him as Tojo's dog or Indian Quisling. In fact Hindu Mahasabha was much more sober in its appraisal of Subhas, unlike some of the virulent Right Wingers of today. Its leader Santosh Mukherjee sharply rebuked a leftist when he referred to Subhas as Quisling, telling him that ***Quisling sold his own country to enemies, Subhas had sold his everything for his own country.*** Irrespective of whatever the Communists and their anti National stooges propagate, V.D Savarkar was a true and ardent nationalist and Bose respected him for that. Even though Communists in their later avatars have tried to become lovers of Subhas, their credibility is anyway at an all time low to seriously believe in them.

Quotations and Speeches

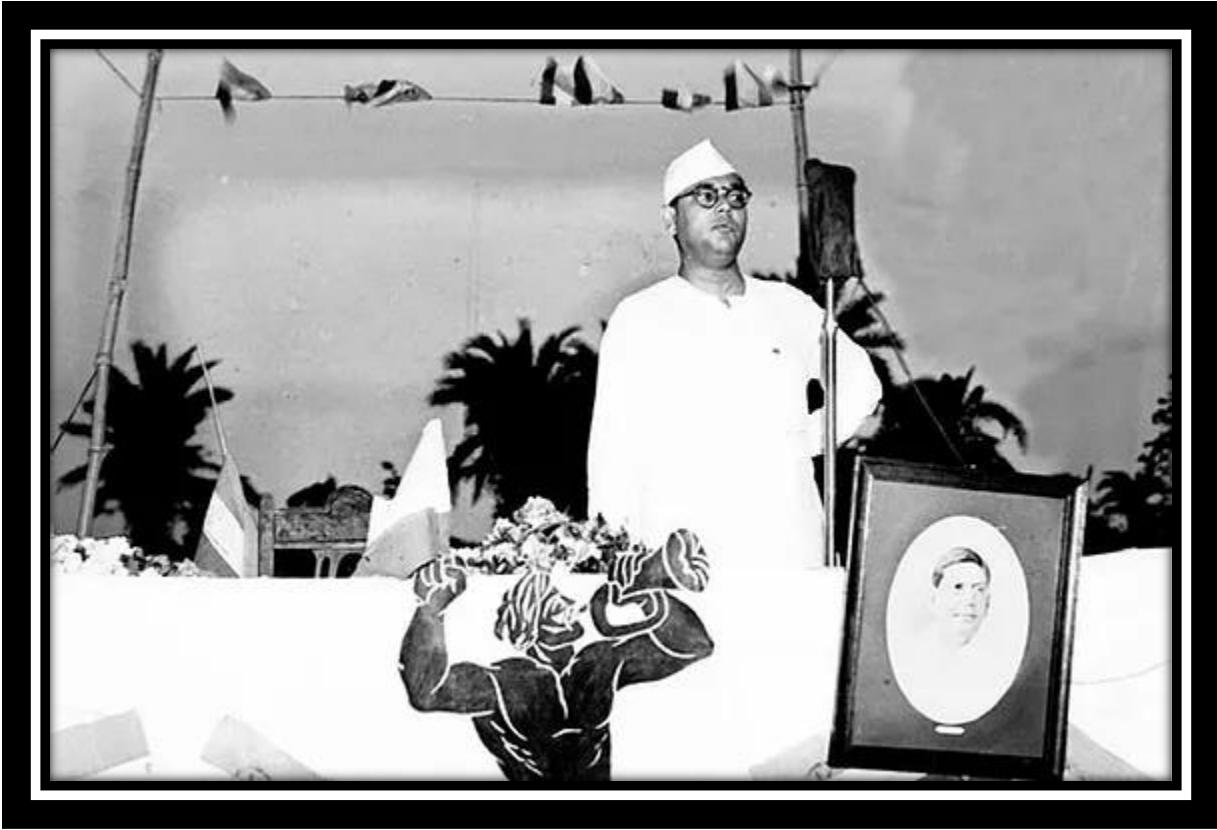
Declaration of Independence resolution in Calcutta Congress - 1928

- You may ask what we shall gain by this resolution of Independence. I say, we develop a new mentality. After all, what is the fundamental cause of our political degradation? It is a question of mentality, and if you want to overcome the slave mentality you do so by encouraging our countrymen to stand for full and complete independence
- Speaking for myself, I stand for an independent Federal Republic. That is the ultimate goal which I have before me. India must fulfil her own destiny and cannot be content with colonial self-government or Dominion Home Rule
- The usual argument that India without the help of Britain cannot defend herself is puerile. It is the Indian army—much more than the British army—which is defending India today
- While striving to attain liberty we have to note all its implications. You cannot free one half of your soul and keep the other half in bondage. You cannot introduce a light into a room and expect at the same time that some portion of it will remain dark. You cannot establish political democracy and endeavour at the same time to resist the democratization of the society

- While I do not condemn any patch-up work that may be necessary for healing communal sores, I would urge the necessity of discovering a deeper remedy for our communal troubles. It is necessary for the different religious groups to be acquainted with the traditions, ideals and history of one another, because cultural intimacy will pave the way towards communal peace and harmony. I venture to think that the fundamental basis of political unity between different communities lies in cultural rapprochement. As things stand today, the different communities inhabiting India are too exclusive
- I have often been asked how the end will come, how the bureaucracy will ultimately be forced to accede to our terms. I have no misgivings in this matter for I have already had a foretaste of what will come. The movement will reach its climax in a sort of general strike or country-wide hartal coupled with a boycott of British goods. Along with the strike or hartal to bring about which labour and the National Congress will heartily co-operate, there will be some form of civil disobedience because the bureaucracy is not likely to sit idle while a strike is going on. It is also possible that there may be non-payment of taxes in some form or other, but this is not essential. When the crisis is reached the average Britisher at home will feel that to starve India politically means economic starvation for him. And the bureaucracy in India will find that it is impossible to carry on the administration in the face of a country-wide non-co-operation movement

Speech at the third session of the All-India Youth Congress, Calcutta December 25, 1928

- In India we want today a philosophy of activism. We must be inspired by robust optimism. We have to live in the present and to adapt ourselves to modern conditions
- I am not one of those who in their zeal for modernism forget the glories of the past. We must take our stand on our past. India has a culture of her own which she must continue to develop along her own distinctive channels. In philosophy, literature, art and science we have something new to give to the world which the world eagerly awaits. In a word, we must arrive at a synthesis



Presidential address at the Rangpur Political Conference, March 30, 1929

- Truth alone is our ideal and that explains why in spite of many inroads on Bengal in culture, civilization, literature and religion, she always assimilated the truth of the newcomers, keeping her individuality intact all the while
- The gospel of democracy that was preached by Swami Vivekananda has manifested itself fully in the writings and achievements of Deshbandhu Das, who said that Narayan lives amongst those who till the land, prepare our bread by the sweat of their brow, those who in the midst of grinding poverty have kept the torch of our civilization, culture and religion burning
- We must not forget that the Russians, the main disciples of Karl Marx, have not blindly followed his ideas; finding it difficult to apply his theories they have adopted a new economic policy consistent with possession of private property and ownership of business factories. We have therefore to shape society and politics according to our own ideals and according to our needs. This should be the aim of every Indian

Students' Conference held at Lahore, 19 October, 1929

- All the aspects of national life are inter-related and all its problems are interwoven. This being the case, it will be found that in a subject race all the evils and all the shortcomings can be traced to a political cause, viz., political servitude. Consequently students cannot afford to blind themselves to the all-important problem of how to achieve our political emancipation
- The gospel of democracy that was preached by Swami Vivekananda has manifested itself fully in the writings and achievements of Deshbandhu Das, who said that Narayan lives amongst those who till the land, prepare our bread by the sweat of their brow, those who in the midst of grinding poverty have kept the torch of our civilization, culture and religion burning
- Thought without action cannot suffice to build character, and for this reason participation in healthy activity—political, social or artistic, is necessary for developing character. Book-worms, gold-medalists and office clerks are not what universities should endeavour to produce, but men of character who will become great by achieving greatness for their country in different spheres
- We shall have to hold out before the students a vision of the ideal society which they should try to realize in their own lifetime. They should chalk out for themselves a programme of action which they should try to follow to the best of their ability, so that while performing their duties as students they may at the same time prepare themselves for their post-university career
- Asia is at the present moment busy throwing off the yoke of thralldom, and the time is not far off when rejuvenated Asia will rise resplendent in power and glory out of the darkness of the past and take her legitimate place in the comity of free nations
- Indian civilization has emerged out of the dark ages and is now entering on a new lease of life. At one time there was a genuine danger that our civilization might die a normal death like the civilizations of Phoenicia and Babylon. But it has once again survived the onslaught of time. If we want to continue the work of rejuvenation that has begun, we must bring about a revolution of ideas, in the world of thought, and an intermingling of blood on the biological plane
- By freedom I mean all-round freedom, i.e., freedom for the individual as well as for society; freedom for the rich as well as for the poor; freedom for men as well as women; freedom for all individuals and for all classes. This freedom implies not only emancipation from political bondage but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barriers and social inequities, and destruction of communalism and religious intolerance
- life has but one meaning and one purpose, namely freedom from bondage of every kind. This hunger after freedom is the song of the soul—and the very first cry of the new-born babe is a cry of revolt against the bondage in which it finds itself. Rouse this intense desire for freedom within yourselves and in your countrymen, and I am sure India will be free in no time

- Even at the risk of being called a chauvinist, I would say to my countrymen that India has a mission to fulfil, and it is because of this that India still lives. There is nothing mystic in this word 'mission'. India has something original to contribute to the culture and civilization of the world in almost every department of human life. In the midst of her present degradation and slavery, the contribution she has been making is by no means a small one. Just imagine for a moment how great her contribution will be once she is free to develop along her own lines and in accordance with her own requirements
- Let us break with the past, destroy all the shackles which have bound us for ages, and like true pilgrims let us march shoulder to shoulder towards our destined goal of freedom. Freedom means life, and death in the pursuit of freedom means glory imperishable. Let us therefore resolve to be free, or at least die in the pursuit of freedom

Karachi conference of the All-India Naujawan Bharat Sabha, March 27, 1931 (Presidential address)

- To summarize what I have said, I want a Socialist Republic in India. The message I have to give is one of complete, all-round, undiluted freedom. Until the radical or revolutionary elements are stirred up we cannot get freedom, and we cannot stir up the revolutionary elements among us except by inspiring them with a new message which comes from the heart and goes straight to the heart
- I do not believe that the Congress programme can win freedom for India. The programme by which I believe freedom can be achieved is : (1) Organization of peasants and workers on a socialistic programme. (2) Organization of youth into Volunteer Corps under strict discipline (3) Abolition of the caste system and the eradication of social and religious superstitions of all kinds. (4) Organization of women's associations for getting our womenfolk to accept the gospel and work out the new programme. (5) Intensive programme for boycott of British goods. (6) Creation of new literature for propagating the new cult and programme
- India is the key-stone to the world edifice and a free India spells the destruction of Imperialism throughout the world. Let us, therefore, rise to the occasion and make India free so that humanity may be saved

Presidential address at the fifty-first session of the Congress at Haripura, February 19, 1938

- Every empire is based on the policy of divide and rule. But I doubt if any empire in the world has practised this policy so skillfully, systematically and ruthlessly

as Great Britain. The British Empire at the present moment is suffering from strain at a number of points. Within the Empire in the extreme West there is Ireland and in the extreme East, India. In the middle lies Palestine with the adjoining countries of Egypt and Iraq. Outside the Empire there is the pressure exerted by Italy in the Mediterranean and Japan in the Far East, both of these countries being militant, aggressive and imperialist. Against this background of unrest stands Soviet Russia whose very existence strikes terror into the hearts of the ruling classes in every imperialist State. How long can the British Empire withstand the cumulative effect of this pressure and strain?

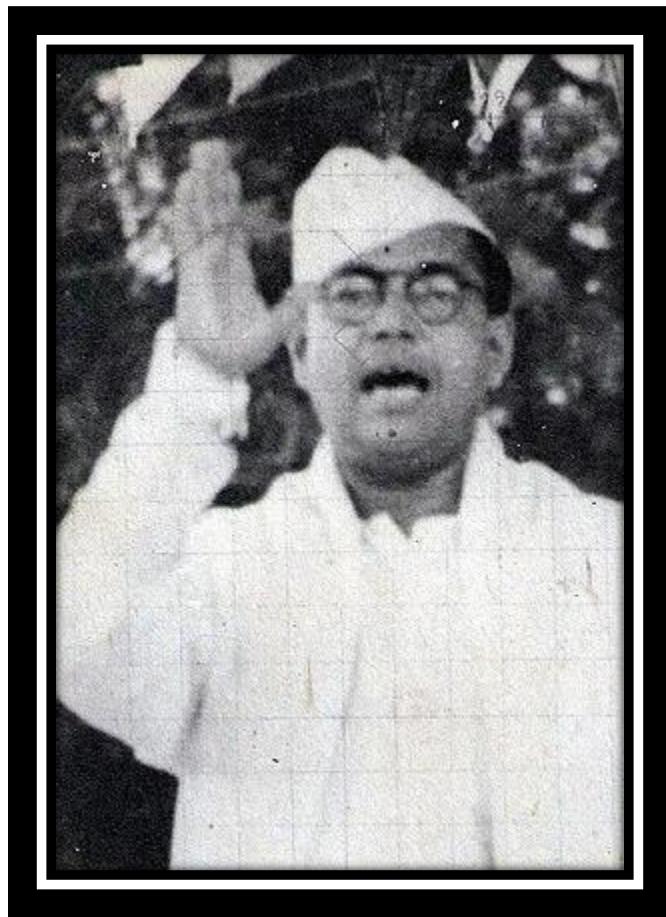
- Today, Britain can hardly call herself the Mistress of the Seas. Her phenomenal rise in the 18th and 19th centuries was the result of her sea-power. Her decline as an empire in the 20th century will be the outcome of the emergence of a new factor in world history—air force
- Our goal is that of an Independent India and in my view that goal can be attained only through a Federal Republic in which the States will be willing partners
- The objective of the Congress is an independent and united India where no class or group or majority or minority may exploit another to its own advantage, and where all the elements in the nation may co-operate together for the common good and the advancement of the people of India. This objective of unity and mutual co-operation in a common freedom does not mean the suppression in any way of the rich variety and cultural diversity of Indian life, which have to be preserved in order to give freedom and opportunity to the individual as well as to each group to develop unhindered according to its capacity and inclination
- I shall merely add that only by emphasizing our common interests, economic and political, can we cut across communal divisions and dissensions. A policy of live and let live in matters religious, and an understanding in matters economic and political, should be our objective
- So far as the religious and social disabilities of the so-called depressed classes are concerned, it is well known that during the last seventeen years the Congress has left no stone unturned in the efforts to remove them, and I have no doubt that the day is not far off when such disabilities will be things of the past
- Like the President of Eire, I should also say that we have no enmity towards the British people. We are fighting Great Britain and we want the fullest liberty to determine our future relations with her. But once we have real self-determination, there is no reason why we should not enter into the most cordial relations with the British people
- I know that there are friends who think that after freedom is won the Congress Party, having achieved its objective, should wither away. Such a conception is entirely erroneous. The party that wins freedom for India should be also the party that will put into effect the entire programme of post-war reconstruction. Only those who have won power can handle it properly. If other people are pitchforked into seats of power which they were not responsible for capturing, they will lack that strength, confidence and idealism which is indispensable for revolutionary

reconstruction...No, there can be no question of the Congress Party withering away after political freedom has been won. On the contrary, the party will have to take over power, assume responsibility for administration and put through its programme of reconstruction. Only then will it fulfill its role. If it were forcibly to liquidate itself, chaos would follow....The existence of more than one party and the democratic basis of the Congress Party will prevent the future Indian State becoming a totalitarian one. Further, the democratic basis of the party will ensure that leaders are not thrust upon the people from above, but are elected from below

- The very first thing which our future national government will have to do would be to set up a commission for drawing up a comprehensive plan of reconstruction. This plan will have two parts—an immediate programme and a long-period programme. In drawing up the first part, the immediate objectives which will have to be kept in view will be three-fold: firstly, to prepare the country for self sacrifice ; secondly, to unify India; and, thirdly, to give scope for local and cultural autonomy
- While unifying the country through a strong Central Government, we shall have to put all the minority communities as well as the provinces at their ease, by allowing them a large measure of autonomy in cultural as well as governmental affairs. Special efforts will be needed to keep our people together when the load of foreign domination is removed, because alien rule has demoralized and disorganized us to a degree. To promote national unity we shall have to develop our lingua franca and a common script
- With regard to the long-period programme for a free India, the first problem to tackle is that of our increasing population. I do not desire to go into the theoretical question as to whether India is over populated or not. I simply want to point out that where poverty, starvation and disease are stalking the land, we cannot afford to have our population mounting up by thirty millions during a single decade. If the population goes up by leaps and bounds, as it has done in the recent past, our plans are likely to fall through. It will, therefore, be desirable to restrict our population until we are able to feed, clothe and educate those who already exist
- Regarding reconstruction, our principal problem will be how to eradicate poverty from our country. That will require radical reform of our land system, including the abolition of landlordism. Agricultural indebtedness will have to be liquidated and provision made for cheap credit for the rural population. An extension of the co-operative movement will be necessary for the benefit of both producers and consumers. Agriculture will have to be put on a scientific basis with a view to increasing the yield from the land
- A comprehensive scheme of industrial development under State ownership and State control will be indispensable. A new industrial system will have to be built up in place of the old one, which has collapsed as a result of mass production abroad and alien rule at home. The Planning Commission will have to consider carefully and decide which of the home industries could be revived despite the

competition of modern factories, and in which sphere large-scale production should be encouraged

- The first thing to do is to change the composition and character of the bureaucracy. If this is not done, the Congress Party may come to grief. In every country, the Ministers come and go but the steel frame of the permanent services remains. If this is not altered in composition and character, the governmental party and its Cabinet are likely to prove ineffective in putting their principles into practice
- A disciplined Volunteer Corps manned by trained officers is exceedingly necessary. Moreover education and training should be provided for our political workers, so that we may produce a better type of leaders in future



Presidential address at All India Forward Bloc Conference, June 1940

1. The wheels of history are grinding on, quite regardless of what we may be doing in India. But in order to fully utilize the opportunity which international events

have presented to us, we must have sufficient unity and solidarity among ourselves. If India could speak with one voice today, our demand would indeed be well-nigh irresistible. It follows, as a consequence, that while we should think of intensifying the national struggle and widening its scope, we should at the same time try to develop national unity and solidarity to the maximum limit

2. We should also bear in mind that the Forward Bloc will have a role to play in the post-struggle phase of our history. It will have to preserve liberty after winning it and it will have to build up a new India and a happy India on the basis of the eternal principles of liberty, democracy and socialism
3. Let us not commit the fatal mistake of thinking that our mission will be over, once we win our freedom. The organization or party that wins freedom must undertake the responsibilities of post-war reconstruction. Only in this manner will continuity of progress be maintained
4. India must in this grave crisis think of herself first. If she can win freedom now and then save herself, she will best serve the cause of humanity. It is for the Indian people to make an immediate demand for the transference of power to them through a Provisional National Government. No constitutional difficulties can be put forward by the British Government with a view to resisting this demand, because legislation for this purpose can be put through Parliament in twenty-four hours. When things settle down inside India and abroad, the Provisional National Government will convene a Constituent Assembly for framing a full-fledged Constitution for this country

Youth Conference in Nagpur, Nov 20, 1929

One who desires to swim with the tide of popular approbation on all occasion may become the hero of the hour, but he cannot live in history, neither he can create history. If we aspire to become makers of history, we should be prepared for any amount of misunderstanding and for any degree of persecution. For the most unselfish actions we should be prepared to get abuse and vilification. From our closest friends we should be prepared to get unwarranted hostility.

Books and Resources

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- [Jai Hind : The Story of a Rebel Daughter of India with the Rani of Jhansi Regiment - Amritlal Sheth](#)
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- [India's Struggle for Freedom, Major General A.C Chatterjee](#)
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2. [Jayasree Publications](#)
3. [Netaji Research Bureau](#)
4. [\(Books and Audio\)](#)
5. [Netaji papers \(declassified files on National Archive\)](#)